

the HILLEL LGBTQ
RESOURCE GUIDE



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For Queer Jews everywhere: this guide is for you.
Here's to a future of reconciliation, celebration, and peace.

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This book contains God's name. Please treat it as you would a prayerbook.

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We thank Rabbi Ayelet Cohen, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, for the text of Shabbat Gavah.

Dear Reader,

I am so pleased that you have opened The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide. The material you hold in your hands (or see before you on your screen) is the product of much hard work. Creating this resource was a labor of love for its many writers, editors, advisors, and supporters. As Hillel professionals it is our chosen duty to reach Jewish students where they are: to touch their lives, inspire their growth, and strengthen their roots. LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) Jewish students have been an integral part of our campus communities for generations. However, their presence, our presence, is sometimes welcomed, sometimes not. In the modern world of Hillel, the struggles that LGBTQ Jewish students face for inclusion and affirmation may stem more from ignorance than from malice. That is precisely why this guide was created and why your role is so very crucial. You are an educator and a role-model. You have the capacity to help students heal from their wounds, to transform communities into warmer spaces, and to suggest the radical notion that all Jews can and should celebrate their identity with love, affirmation, and joy. I hope that this guide will serve as a resource for both education and celebration.

We all have much to learn. No matter how progressive you may be, how many Gay friends you may have, how extensive your knowledge-base is... there is what to learn. And so I ask you to read carefully and generously. What is unique about The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide is that it was written and edited by your colleagues. LGBTQ and allied professionals in “the field”, on college campuses, have contributed their knowledge, their experiences, and their suggestions to this marvelous resource. Please allow them to guide you.

This guide is broken down into three sections. In the first section you will find background information regarding the community your students are coming from or coming to. First, Miriam Ignatoff (Oberlin) coaches readers in how to use vocabulary inclusively. She includes an extensive lexicon of popular words you may not be familiar with (e.g. FTM, genderqueer, heterosexism, ze, etc.). Next, Rabbi Leslie Bergson (Claremont Colleges) and Noah Branman (Stanford) begin by offering an overview of Jewish LGBTQ history in the United States and Israel. Finally, Rabbi Seth Goren (University of Pittsburgh & Carnegie Mellon) and Josh Furman (University of Washington) bring the reader up to date with cutting edge information on current events that students are discussing, coping with, and advocating for.

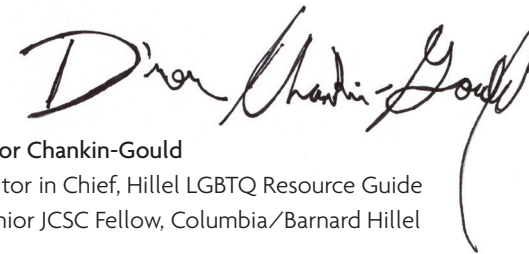
The second section of the guide focuses on helping skills: how can a Hillel professional best assist LGBTQ Jewish students along their challenging, complicated, and exciting journeys? Rabbi Bruce Bromberg Seltzer (Smith and Amherst Colleges) starts off by coaching readers in how to be active allies. Next, Rabbi Mychal Copeland (Stanford) offers insight into coming out on campus while Rabbi Lina Zerbarini (Yale) teaches about the mental health

of Jewish LGBTQ students. Following these general insights, two specific groups of students are addressed: S. Bear Bergman (Canadian-based artist and activist) and Rabbi Sharon Stiefel (University of Minnesota) lend their expertise regarding welcoming, respectively, transgender students and children of LGBTQ families. Finally, resources are offered for moving into action. Rabbi Jason Klein (University of Maryland-Baltimore) and Rabbi Mychal Copeland (Stanford) suggest affirming life-cycle and holiday-based rituals to enact/embrace. And to close off the section on helping resources, Rabbi Mike Rothbaum (Westchester) revisits Biblical Jewish texts so that readers may view our tradition as validating, healing, and welcoming.

The third and final section of the resource guide is very *tachlis* (pragmatic). Here you will find “practical” resources for programming and networking. Josh Furman (University of Washington) starts off with an overview of successful LGBTQ Jewish campus programs. Andy Ratto (Washington University) follows with an extensively annotated guide to LGBTQ Jewish movies, culture, speakers, and literature. Next, Noah Branman (Stanford) lists out organizations that serve LGBTQ Jewish communities. I then offer a roster of LGBTQ and allied Hillel staff and student groups to learn with and from. Finally, Dennis Kirschbaum (Schusterman International Center) helped provide the texts that delineate the equanimity and justice that Hillel has promised its employees.

This text is a living one. Over the years it is our hope and intention that this guide will be added to, edited, expanded, and revisited. In the meantime, on behalf of our writers, editors, and, most of all, our students I want to thank you for learning with us and from us.

Now, as our grandmothers would instruct us: Go Learn.



D'ror Chankin-Gould
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Senior JCSC Fellow, Columbia/Barnard Hillel

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To the writers: your words will encourage affirmation and active learning. Thank you for contributing your artistry and your intellect. Thank you: S. Bear Bergman, Rabbi Leslie Bergson, Noah Branman, Rabbi Bruce Bromberg Seltzer, Rabbi Mychal Copeland, Josh Furman, Rabbi Seth Goren, Miriam Ignatoff, Dennis Kirschbaum, Rabbi Jason Klein, Andy Ratto, Rabbi Michael Rothbaum, Rabbi Sharon Stiefel, and Rabbi Lina Zerbarini.

To the editors: your insight and foresight have made our offering more complete and more accessible. Thank you Becky Adelberg, Paul Cohen, Rabbi Mychal Copeland, Josh Furman, and David Levy. In particular thanks are due to my fabulous colleagues on the chief editing team: Vanessa Prell, Rachel Singer, and Rabbi Sharon Stiefel. Without you this work would not have been possible. Also to copy editor, Chanel Dubofsky a favorite quote comes to mind. E.B. White writes of the infamous Charlotte: "It is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer. Charlotte was both." Chanel is both.

To the entire team: this project has been supported by internet whizzes, financial spelunkers, brainstormers, cheerleaders, and many others. Here I call out their names... apparently it takes a village to write a book. Rabbi David Almog, Simon Amiel, Melanie Annis, David Basior, Kerin Berger, Marc Bragin, Scott Brown, Gregg Drinkwater, Wayne Firestone, Nomi Fridman, Yana Geyfman, Josh Gold, Clare Goldwater, Jennifer Gravitz, Mark Greenberg, Leah M. Kahn, Nellie Krentzman, Rabbi David Levin-Kruss, Dan Libenson, Nathan Martin, Ellen Mazer, David Milch, Grant Meyer, Caren Minkoff, Ariel Naveh, Jose Portuondo, Ellen Rosenshein, Jody Rozensky, Jeff Rubin, Noa Sattah, Jamie Berman Schifffman, Jacob Staub, Cary Walksi, Nathan Weiner, and Kenny Weiss. Particular thanks are due to Leora Shudofsky my tolerant supervisor who enabled me to dedicate energy, time, and passion to this important project. And to Cantor David Berger, the love of my life: not only did you contribute directly to the writing of this guide, but you supported me, encouraged me, and loved me, throughout the many twists and turns along this road. Thank you so much.

Thanks to Hillel at the University of Minnesota Public Relations Director, Cary Walski for her cover design. A very special thank you to designer Brian M Johnson at **LOUDEST ink** for stepping in at the last minute under excruciating deadlines to give this dream its form and to make it a reality.

Finally, to the project leaders: to Rabbi Sharon Stiefel- advisor, tireless supporter, and chief advocate: your passion and experience have been priceless. I can not thank you enough. Saving one of the best for last, this project was the brain child of Rachel Singer (former Senior JCSC Fellow, University of Chicago) and myself. Rachel co-chaired the initial meeting at Hillel Professional Staff Conference with me, helped send out all the subsequent emails, and guided this project's progress with vigor and passion. Her stamp is on every page of this guide.

STUDENT NARRATIVES

Here you will find a few sample stories from Queer Jewish college students. It is for the sake of these students that this guide was created. We include their stories because our students are diverse and so our resources must be as well.

Being raised Orthodox, I always felt that my homosexuality would never be really accepted. Before I came out, I was afraid of being rejected by my friends and family. For over eight years, I suppressed my homosexuality, believing that it was just a phase; I could overcome it. After attending Jewish day school for over thirteen years, I decided to embark on a mission of identity; I chose to take a year off after high school and attend Yeshiva in Israel... After experiencing Heritage, an eight day Holocaust tour of Eastern Europe, I realized I had to come out for the sake of my own happiness. I could never live alone. I deserved, like all of my friends, to be happy. I, too, could experience love.

The summer after Israel I was warmly accepted by my friends and family. The following year I started my collegiate experience at the University of Pennsylvania. There I joined a subsidiary of Hillel, the Jewish Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians (JBaGeL). JBaGeL really helped me find my niche on campus and has allowed me to become more comfortable with myself. Now feeling as if I am bent on a mission, I want to make others feel just as comfortable. Coming from an orthodox environment, my homosexuality isn't really all that accepted, and before I came out, I felt like my parents would shun me. Though it wasn't the easiest thing in the world, because of their love and understanding, coming out has been a wonderful experience, and I want to share that with the world.

Matt, 20, University of Pennsylvania

Being a lesbian Jew means I get invited to an impressive number of feminist seders for Passover every year. I'm supposed to be really into Sandra Bernhard or Judy Gold. I'm supposed to hang out with a bunch of other Jewish lesbians, and we're supposed to make bad jokes about "just wanting to find a nice Jewish girl" while we talk about Miriam or Gertrude Stein. I'm supposed to get introspective/self-pitying every so often and ask myself, "If I had been living in Nazi-occupied Europe back in the day, would I have been killed for being Jewish or for being queer?"

I'm not saying I don't do these things, but I try to indulge in my cultural stereotypes in moderation. Maybe this is just where I grew up, but living in California, there are so many Jews and so many queers that the overlap of the two is a pretty standard combination -- standard enough to have its own Jewish/gay stereotype. To be sure, a lot of Jews are uncomfortable around queers, and a lot of queers think all organized religion that isn't some sort of neo-Pagan goddess worship is suspect, but I don't get invited to those people's parties very often. I imagine they aren't much fun, anyway.

Melodee, 23, University of San Francisco

Like many mixed-race Jews from mixed-religion families, I came to terms with my Jewishness only as an adult. In fact, I "came out" as a Jew after I came out as Gay! And let me tell you, at least around Minneapolis, being mixed and never having been at camp is a lot weirder than being Gay. So when I hear about the hard times other Queer Jews I know have gone through in the Jewish community, my first reaction is sadness that they don't feel as liberated and empowered as I do.

But at what cost? I suppose I feel liberated and empowered to be Queer and Jewish because I don't particularly care what most of the mainstream Jewish community thinks about me. Think, for example, about someone having a hard time with their Conservative or Orthodox rabbi. Well, I wouldn't have a hard time because that rabbi doesn't even consider me Jewish.

So I've got a relatively unique experience - at least, relatively unique outside of the activist community - and I'm okay with not being able to share it with many of my peers. If there's one thing I can share with other Queer Jews, maybe it's just the fact that these people who make your life hard sometimes really don't have any power over you. There are people like me out there, and our very existence shows how little power those queermphobes have.

Bryan, 24, University of Minnesota

It wasn't until university that I felt more comfortable and willing to let others know that I am queer. Although I am still not out to my family, primarily due to their religious background, I found a large support network of other like-minded people on my campus, many of them even Jewish. Having Queer Jewish friends has been a blessing—it's an incredible experience to be able to spend a holiday with people who understand your sexual identity as well as your religious one.

It was only this year when I became involved with Nehirim and NUJLS (the National Union of Jewish LGBTQ Students) that I increased my network of Queer Jews outside of my own campus walls, which has a very small community. Meeting Queer Jewish students from all across the USA has been an eye-opening experience for me—I appreciate hearing their experiences, challenges and triumphs because it gives me a greater feeling of being a part of a strong community.

Lauryn, 21, Concordia University

LANGUAGE & TERMINOLOGY

USE THIS SECTION TO:

Gain a better understanding of the language and terminology used in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) community.

Begin learning about the LGBTQ community, keeping in mind that all campuses and communities can have their own slang and terminology and to effectively reach certain students on your campus, you need to be keyed into campus LGBTQ community.

This section should **NOT** be used as the final word for the meanings of these terms. The terminology and language of the LGBTQ community is continually evolving and changing. This section can prove to be a useful resource as long as you understand that it is only a starting ground.

SECTION 1

Language & Terminology
Miriam Ignatoff

Glossary of Terms

Jewish LGBTQ History
Rabbi Leslie Bergson & Noah Branman

Current Events
Rabbi Seth Goren & Josh Furman

1) CREATION OF LGBTQ LANGUAGE/LEXICON

LGBTQ language is an attempt to mirror the diversity of gender identity and sexual orientation. The words used are meant to convey this diversity and differences within the LGBTQ community and the other communities. Language in general, but especially in the LGBTQ community, is evolving. It is vital to take clues from your campus LGBTQ community about the evolution of language on your campus and in the general community. It is also important, especially with words that had previously been used with negative connotations, that you are sure of their current meaning and connotation, and how they are used in your campus' LGBTQ community.

When dealing with language it is generally recommended to use terms that are descriptive rather than prescriptive (i.e. describing the situation instead of judging or dictating appearances or behaviors). For example, it is preferable to say someone is dating a man instead of calling him a homosexual.

2) BEING THOUGHTFUL WITH LANGUAGE

It is crucial to be thoughtful about the language you use to address LGBTQ students in order to deliver on the promise that your community is welcoming. This includes thoughtful and respectful advertisement for programs, as well as using welcoming and affirming language once LGBTQ Jewish students walk into your Hillel (e.g. greetings, signs, buttons, etc.).

Author: Miriam Ignatoff
Editors: D'ror Chankin-Gould
& Joshua Furman

As in all relationships with students, careful use of language is tantamount to ensuring confidentiality. Never disclose a student's sexual orientation without consent. Remember, just because a student is out (open) to you does not mean she is out to her parents, or he is out to his roommate, or ze is out to hir colleagues (ze and hir are gender neutral pronouns, for more information check out the glossary). If you accidentally share confidential information with another person (it happens to the best of us) make sure to apologize and offer support to the student whose secret you have inadvertently shared.

If you don't know how somebody identifies, first pause and ask yourself whether this information is necessary (e.g. you may need to know for speed dating, you certainly don't need to know for a Shabbat dinner). When it is appropriate and/or relevant, it is often perfectly acceptable to ask in a non-threatening way. People may not want to label themselves with a gender identity or sexual orientation. Everyone does not have to fit into the box or category. Be cognizant of the individual humanity of the student who stands before you.

LGBTQ people have often experienced some form of discrimination or violence relating to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Therefore, many LGBTQ people assume/fear that they are not welcome unless there is active facilitation of inclusion.

3) HOW TO AVOID BEING OFFENSIVE WHEN YOU DON'T MEAN TO BE

Many people who are familiar and unfamiliar with LGBTQ issues can be inadvertently rude or offensive. Some key pointers are:

- a. Don't Assume Everyone is Straight—This is often seen in the assumption that romantic/sexual partners are always of different genders or that people inherently want to get married (or are able, legally, to do so).
- b. Don't Tokenize People—Tokenizing is when one member of a minority groups is expected to represent that group at all times or in all things. Remember: each LGBTQ student is required to represent only themselves, not the larger group.
- c. Be Careful of In-group Versus Out-group Terminology—Just because someone uses a term or phrase among other LGBTQ people does not mean that someone else can use it. The reclaiming of previously derogatory terms by the LGBTQ community is becoming common, however just because

a person uses a derogatory to refer to themselves, does not mean it is ok for other people to use that term. (e.g. just because a gay man might call himself a fag, does not mean that someone else can call him a fag.)

d. Avoid Labeling—It is vital to use the words people choose to describe themselves. A good rule of thumb is to only use the labels (not derogatory) that the person has already used to describe themselves.

e. Avoid Stereotypes—Like all students, LGBTQ people want to be seen as individuals not as stereotyped categories of a group at large. Not all lesbians use power tools, not all gay men love fashion. Ask about the person; don't assume based on the stereotype.

4) LGBTQ 101: GENDER IDENTITY vs. SEXUAL ORIENTATION

LGBTQ is an umbrella term that really encompasses two sometimes related, but ultimately distinct, forms of identity—gender identity and sexual orientation. Understanding the difference between these two groups will help you to work effectively with LGBTQ students and to make sense of the glossary found on the following pages.

Gender identity has to do with self perception and body. This refers to the way a person acts, dresses, and identifies in terms of masculinity, femininity, or anything in between. Folks whose biological sex and gender identity do not align directly are sometimes called transgender. (That's the T in LGBTQ). Within the transgender community are people who identify in many different ways and along many distinct axes. Terms related to these identities are marked (GI) in the lexicon that follows. These words include but are not limited to transgender, transsexual, genderqueer, androgynous, drag queen, and ze.

Sexual orientation refers to a person's sexual and romantic attractions to others. Attraction is complicated and diverse so folks in the LGBTQ community encompass many different permutations of sexual orientation. Terms related to these identities are marked (SO) in the lexicon. These words include but are not limited to gay male, lesbian, and bisexual. (That's the L, G, and B!).

Glossary of terminology The following pages offer an alphabetical listing of commonly used words, phrases, and terms within the LGBTQ community. Please read thoroughly.

Glossary of Terms

The following definitions will help you to understand and properly use some of the terms associated with sexual orientation (SO) and gender identity (GI). If there are any questions, please contact the writers of the Resource Guide (see Contacts).

- Androgynous** 1. A person who appears equally masculine and feminine.
2. A person who appears gender ambiguous. (GI)
- Ally** Any non-LGBTQ person who supports and stands up for the rights of LGBTQ people. An ally takes seriously the responsibilities of recognizing his/her power privilege, of educating him/herself, and of advocating for the equal treatment of Queer people. Not a term to be taken lightly. (GI/SO)
- Asexual** One who has no significant interest in sexual activity (does not preclude emotional attachment). (SO)
- Biological Sex** This term refers to the cluster of chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical features associated with maleness and femaleness in the human body. The existence of intersex people points to a multiplicity of sexes in the human population. (GI)
- Bi(sexual)** One who has significant sexual or romantic attractions to members of both the genders and/or sexes. (SO)
- Biphobia** The oppression or mistreatment of bisexuals, either by heterosexuals or by lesbians and gay men. (SO)
- Butch** 1. Masculine dress and behavior, regardless of sex or gender identity.
2. A sub-identity of lesbian and bisexual women based on masculine or macho dress and behavior. (Antonym: femme.) (GI/SO)
- Coming Out (of the closet)** To be “in the closet” means to hide one’s identity. To “come out” is to publicly declare one’s identity, sometimes to one person in conversation, sometimes to a group or in a public setting. Many LGBTQ people are “out” in some situations and “closeted” in others. Coming out is a life-long process—in each new situation a person must decide whether or not to come out. (GI/SO)
- Closeted** Not open about one’s sexual orientation or gender identity. (GI/SO)
- Drag** The wearing of dramatic clothes assigned to another gender, often in a performance context. (GI)
- Drag Queen/King** A person who employs dramatic clothes, makeup, & mannerisms societally ascribed to another gender for performance purposes(GI)

- F2M/FTM** 1. literally: Female to male.
2. colloquial: Used by a transgender person to specify the direction of a change in gender or sex. (GI)

- Femme** 1. Feminine or effeminate dress and behavior, regardless of sex or gender identity.
2. A sub-identity of lesbian and bisexual women based on feminine or effeminate dress and behavior. (Antonym: butch.) (GI/SO)

- Gay** 1. One who has significant sexual or romantic attractions primarily to members of the same gender or sex.
2. Often used as a synonym for gay male .
3. A sometimes out of date umbrella term for LGBTQ. Lesbians and Bisexuals often do not feel included by this term. (SO)

- Gay man/male** A man/boy who has exclusive sexual and romantic attractions to other men. (SO)

- Gender/Gender Identity** Gender refers to that which a society deems “masculine” or “feminine.” Gender identity refers to our innermost concept of self as man, woman, transgender, or other identity categories. NOT the same as sex. (GI)

- Gender Expression** A person’s presentation (dress, mannerisms, hairstyle, etc.) as masculine, feminine, or neither. Not necessarily related to gender identity or sexual orientation. (GI)

- Genderqueer** A gender identity between or outside the binaries of masculine or feminine. May also refer to people who identify as both transgender AND queer, i.e. individuals who see gender identity and sexual orientation as overlapping and interconnected. Some genderqueer people use gender neutral pronouns (see Ze.) (GI)

- Gender Role** A set of roles and behaviors assigned to females and males by society. (GI)

- Hermaphrodite** An outdated and politically incorrect term for intersex. (see **Intersex**) (GI)

- Heterosexism** The systemic, institutional, and interpersonal assumption that everyone is straight thus rendering those in the LGBTQ community invisible. Heterosexism is a social norm in both the secular and Jewish communities. The term can describe seemingly innocent questions such as “do you have a boyfriend?” or “when you get married.” (SO)

- Heterosexual** One whose exclusive sexual and romantic attractions are to members of another gender or sex. (colloquial: straight.) (SO)

Homophobia	1. A fear of (and/or hate towards) sexual attraction to the same gender or sex. 2. A fear of (and/or hate towards) LGBTQ people. (See heterosexism , biphobia .) (SO)
Homosexuality	Sexual or romantic behavior between members of the same gender or sex. A description of behavior. (SO)
Internalized homophobia/biphobia/transphobia	The unwitting subscription by LGBTQ people to society's messages that they are bad, inferior, abominable, etc. (GI/SO)
Institutionalized homophobia/biphobia/transphobia	Institutional societal arrangements used to benefit heterosexuals at the expense of LGBTQ people, illustrated through the use of language, media, education, economics, religion, etc. (GI/SO)
Intersex	One whose external genitalia at birth do not match the scientific standards for male or female, or one whose sex glands or sexual development do not totally match the sex assigned at birth. (Note: Many intersex infants are surgically "corrected" to conform to the sexual binary of "male" and "female." However, the Intersex Movement seeks to halt pediatric surgeries and hormone treatments.) (GI)
Lesbian	A girl/woman who has exclusive sexual and romantic attractions to other women. (SO)
LGBTQ/GLBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender. This acronym is one of the most commonly used terms for identifying the non-heterosexual community. Occasionally the term will be expanded to read LGBTQ I QQA. In this case, people who identify as Intersex, Queer, Questioning, and Asexual and/or Allied have been included in the term. (See Queer) (GI/SO)
M2F/MTF	1. literally: Male to female. 2. Colloquial: used by a transgender person to describe the direction of a change in sex or gender. (GI)
Out	1. To disclose a second person's sexual or gender identity to a third person, especially without the second person's permission. 2. To be open about one's sexual orientation/gender identity (See come out .) (GI/SO)
Pass	1. To be perceived as a member of a dominant identity group (i.e. straight, white, Christian, binary gender identity, etc.) 2. To be perceived as straight.

3. To be perceived as the gender one chooses rather than the one assigned at birth. (Parallel: **stealth**) (GI/SO)

Sex (See **Biological Sex**)

Sexual minority An umbrella term used to refer to LGBTQ people while sometimes including other groups associated with sex and sexuality. (SO)

Sexual Reassignment Surgery (SRS) A surgical procedure which changes one's primary sexual characteristics from those of one sex to those of another sex, to align them with one's gender identity. (GI)

Sexual Orientation/Sexual Identity **Sexual Orientation/Sexual Identity:** A person's sexual and romantic attractions to others. (SO)

Straight **Straight:** Colloquial for heterosexual. (SO)

Transgender A person whose gender identity does not match their born biological sex. Transgender is often used as an umbrella term. Transgender people may or may not choose to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically. When referring to transgender people, use the pronoun they have designated as appropriate. (GI)

Transition The period of time in which a person begins to live in a gender role which is in accordance with their internal gender identity. Transition may include some or all of the following: changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents, hormone therapy, and possibly some form of chest and/or genital alteration. (GI)

Transsexuals Transgender people who alter their bodies surgically and/or hormonally to align their biological sex and gender identity. This process is called a transition (formerly called "sex change"). It is a complicated, multi-step process that may take years. (GI)

Transvestite (TV) A term often mistakenly associated with gender identity; one who cross dresses as a fetish for erotic pleasure.

Queer **Queer:** Historically a negative term used against people perceived to be LGBTQ, "queer" has more recently been reclaimed by some people as a positive term describing all those who do not conform to rigid notions of gender and sexuality. Queer is often used in a political context and in academic settings to challenge traditional ideas about identity (e.g. "queer theory"). (GI/SO)

Questioning Refers to people who are uncertain as to their sexual orientation or gender identity. (GI/SO)

Ze A non-gendered pronoun used in place of he or she (ze rhymes with she). This is a pronoun that some genderqueer or transgender people prefer. Its companion term is hir (pronunciation: “here”) taking the place of him or her. (See Trans Section) (GI)

JEWISH LGTBQ HISTORY

Some definitions adapted from:

1. Blumenfeld, Warren. *Looking at Gay and Lesbian Life and Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price*
2. The Bisexual Resource Center: www.biresource.org/pamphlets/glossary.html
3. www.glaad.org
4. www.trans-academics.org
5. www.nyu.edu/lgbt

NOTES

1) LGBTQ JEWISH HISTORY IN THE U.S: A QUICK REVIEW

The Stonewall Rebellion & Its Aftermath

It was common in the 1960's for police to “raid” bars where LGBTQ people gathered. Although no crimes, or even infractions were being committed, it kept gay people terrified of being identified and shamed, risking their jobs and their family relationships. On the Friday night of June 27-28, 1969, New York police raided a Christopher Street bar called the Stonewall Inn. For once, the patrons fought back. They tossed bottles, rocks and a parking meter at the police, and mobilized the neighborhood. The rioting went on for three nights, eventually tapering off. From these beginnings, the modern Gay Liberation movement was formed. One year after the Stonewall Rebellion, a march was held from the site of the Stonewall Tavern (the bar itself was closed in 1969 but has reopened over the years under a variety of other names. It is currently being renovated and renamed the Stonewall Inn and is now recognized as an official historic landmark) to Central Park, where a rally was held. This was the first Gay Pride march. Although Gay Pride marches are now held in cities throughout the world, the one in New York is still called the Christopher Street Liberation Parade.

Jewish Involvement in the Liberation Movements of the 1960s & 70s

American Jews were deeply involved in the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The prophetic tradition exhorts us not to oppress the stranger, and Jews responded to the call. Beginning with the campaign to register African American voters in the South, Northern and Southern Jews alike took a vital role in such actions as voter registration drives and anti-segregation protests. A few years later, many of the leaders of the Women's Liberation movement were Jewish. Given this history, it is not surprising that, when the Gay Liberation movement began, Jews were sympathetic to the cause. At the same time, psychiatry was making advances in research which declassified homosexuality as mental illness (1973), and the stigma of homosexuality was lessened. Of course, sympathy to this particular cause was somewhat more controversial than the others, as the Jewish

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legal tradition regarded male homosexuality as an abomination, and female homosexuality as a lesser evil, but still undesirable.

The Gay Synagogue Movement

One of the first gay and lesbian groups, which preceded the Stonewall Rebellion, was the Metropolitan Community Church, organized in Los Angeles in 1968 by the Reverend Troy Perry. This church was run by and for gays and lesbians. Many Jews who felt rejected by synagogues but were looking for a religious element in their lives came to the church, and in 1972, a Jewish group began their own house of worship, calling it the Metropolitan Community Synagogue, later changing its name to Beth Chayim Chadashim. Rabbi Erwin Herman, then the regional director of Reform Judaism's Union of American Hebrew Congregations (now Union of Reform Judaism), supported the congregation, and helped them to join the Union in 1973. Other congregations were soon formed in New York, Miami, Chicago and San Francisco. Some joined the Reform movement; others remained independent. In 1976, the first formal meeting of gay and lesbian Jewish organizations took place with representatives of ten organizations discussing common concerns. In 1977, New York hosted the Second International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews with over 200 people attending. Subsequent conferences were held in Los Angeles in 1978 and Israel in 1979. In 1980 in San Francisco, the World Congress was officially begun. The World Congress changed its name to The World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Jews : Keshet Ga'avah by a mail-in ballot in February, 2001. It now consists of some fifty synagogues and organizations all over the world.

Developments in Reconstructionist Judaism

Reconstructionist Judaism fully supports LGBTQ people, welcoming as clergy gay men and lesbians since 1984 (Rabbi Deborah Brin became the movement's first openly gay rabbi in 1985) and transgender people since 2003. The movement also forbids employment discrimination based on sexual orientation. Reconstructionist rabbis began officiating at same-sex weddings as early as 1984 and were given official permission to do so by 1993. Officially, however, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA) has left the decision of whether to perform same-sex union ceremonies up to individual rabbis. Reconstructionist religious schools often go as far as to offer workshops designed to educate students about same-sex parents. Of great import is the fact that Camp JRF has an outstanding reputation as being a welcoming place for Queer staff members, campers, and the children of LGBTQ parents.

Developments in Reform Judaism

From the founding of Beth Chayim Chadashim, the Reform movement has generally been supportive of the rights of gays and lesbians. In 1975 and 1977 resolutions were passed at the UAHC Biennial conventions calling for civil rights for homosexuals in the civic arena. At the same time, a 1978 CCAR Responsa, approval was given for a rabbi to officiate at the marriage of two Jews, one of whom has undergone sex reassignment surgery. In 1987, a resolution was passed encouraging gay and lesbian Jews to participate in the life of all synagogues, and urging synagogues to hire employees "without regard to sexual orientation". Despite the language, this provision did not extend to rabbis, as Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the Reform movement's seminary, did not have a policy about accepting openly gay applicants until 1990. HUC-JIR accepted its first openly transgender rabbinical student in 2003. From about 1985 on, the UAHC was very proactive in AIDS/HIV awareness, even creating a panel for the AIDS quilt in 1987. Additionally the UAHC, in 1983, agreed to adopt LGBTQ positive explanatory language regarding Leviticus, Chapter 18, in the second and subsequent editions of *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*. The final issue in which the Reform movement led the way was in the realm of gay/lesbian unions. At the annual conference of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 2000, a resolution was passed allowing Reform rabbis to officiate at same sex commitment ceremonies. The resolution was a compromise that stops short of classifying gay unions as "kiddushin", the term used for religious Jewish marriage.

Developments in Conservative Judaism

In 1992, the Committee on Jewish Laws and Standards (CJLS), the halachic (Jewish legal) arm of the Rabbinical Assembly that decides issues of Jewish law, issued a "Consensus Statement." It welcomed homosexuals into the community, but denied them admission into the seminaries and cantorial schools. The ruling left it up to individual rabbis and synagogues to decide whether homosexuals could function as educators or youth leaders or receive honors in worship and in the community.¹

In 2002, organizations were formed at the two seminaries of the Conservative movement – Keshet at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York and D'ror Yikra at the University of Judaism – to educate and advocate for the admission of gays and lesbians to the rabbinical programs of the Conservative movement. In 2006, after years of discussion, the CJLS passed three conflicting legal opinions — one in favor of gay rabbis and unions, and two against. None of the three passed with enough votes to

become binding, thus leaving the decision about which of the three opinions to follow to the discretion of individual congregations and communities.

Similar to the course the Conservative Movement undertook in its acceptance of female rabbis, the decision for inclusion was once again left up to individual seminaries and synagogues. In terms of ordination, the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies immediately used this opportunity to open its doors to gay men and lesbians and the Jewish Theological Seminary followed suit soon thereafter. However, Machon Schechter in Jerusalem announced a continuation of the ban on openly gay rabbinical students. The way in which the celebration of same-sex unions will or will not take place within Conservative congregations is yet to be determined.

In 2003, the CJLS approved a responsa on the status of transgender people that concluded that individuals who have undergone full sex reassignment surgery (SRS), and whose sex reassignment has been recognized by civil authorities, are considered to have changed their sex status according to Jewish law.

Developments in Orthodox Judaism

In 1993, Tikkun magazine featured an article written anonymously by a gay Orthodox rabbi who was living in secret. He called himself “Yaakov Levado” – Jacob alone. Several years later, Rabbi Steven Greenberg identified himself as the author of that article. He now works as a Senior Teaching Fellow at CLAL-The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, and is the author of *Wrestling with God & Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition*. He is happily no longer alone.

In the year 2001, the Sundance Festival featured a documentary film over which Sandi Simcha Dubowski had been laboring for six years. *Trembling Before G-d* is filled with powerful interviews of women and men who are Orthodox Jews who are gay and lesbian. Some of them live Orthodox lives and some have broken away. Some of them are in touch with their families and some are estranged. The film has been a powerful influence in the Orthodox community, and has been instrumental in bringing understanding of gay and lesbian concerns to Orthodox Jews in a way that can be easily understood and felt. Since that time the number of support groups for LGBTQ Orthodox people has expanded significantly and the visibility of their lives and concerns has increased at an unprecedented rate.

Conclusions

LGBTQ Jews in the United States are presented today with an exciting time in this country’s history. Much has changed. Many doors have opened.

The world is spinning forward. There is a long way to go in terms of acceptance, celebration, and progress. However, the work has begun, and the time for vibrancy, activism, and creativity is now.

Sources:

¹ Los Angeles Jewish Journal 2005-10-07 “*In Search of a Leader: can anyone save Conservative Judaism from itself?*” by Amy Klein, Religious Editor

Adam, Barry D., *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement*, Twayne Publishers, Boston, 1987.

Eger, Denise L., “Embracing Lesbians and Gay Men: A Reform Jewish Innovation” in *Contemporary Debates in American Judaism: Conflicting Visions*, Dana Evan Kaplan, Ed., Routledge, New York, 2001, pp. 180-192.

2) LGBTQ JEWS IN ISRAEL

Israel is, objectively speaking, one of the world’s most progressive countries in terms of legal rights granted to LGBTQ individuals. However, according to Noa Sattah, Executive Director of the Jerusalem Open House, it is important to understand that Israeli society’s general acceptance and goodwill outside of Tel Aviv is very limited. Thus, while this resource will open with an examination of legal rights, we urge the reader to keep in mind that Israeli society and culture may be less open-minded than the legal and legislative systems suggest.

Legal Rights

The State of Israel inherited its sodomy laws from British influence. However, in 1963 the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that this law could not be enforced; however, in certain cases defendants were nonetheless found guilty. The ban on consensual same-sex acts was formally repealed by the national legislative assembly, the Knesset, in 1988. The age of consent for both heterosexuals and homosexuals is sixteen years.

Employment discrimination based on sexual orientation has been illegal in Israel since 1992. Since 1993, the Israeli Military has allowed gays and lesbians to serve openly in the army. Israeli soldiers are even permitted to transition gender/sex while serving. (Sexual Reassignment Surgery is covered by the national health insurance)

In 2005 the Supreme Court ruled (7-2) that a lesbian couple is able to legally adopt each other's children. Following the Supreme Court ruling, on February 12, 2006, two lesbians were allowed to adopt one another's biological children. Before that, same-sex parents were merely granted "guardianship" over their partner's children.

Israeli law recognizes legally sanctioned foreign same-sex marriages. It does not, however, allow same-sex couples to marry. It should be noted that civil marriage doesn't exist in Israel for heterosexual couples, either, and therefore only marriages sanctioned by (Orthodox) religious authorities can take place within Israel. (This restriction forces not only gay couples, but also all mixed-religion heterosexual couples and any person who desires a non religious marriage, to marry outside of the country.)

The State of Israel allows foreign partners of same-sex couples to receive residency permits. The Civil Service Commission extends spousal benefits and pensions to the partners of gay and lesbian employees. Same-sex couples are treated the same as common-law spouses, recognizing them as legal units for tax, real estate, and financial purposes. The city of Tel Aviv recognizes unmarried couples, including gays and lesbians, as family units and grants them discounts for municipal services. Under the bylaw, unmarried couples qualify for the same discounts on day care and the use of swimming pools, sports facilities, and other city-sponsored activities that married couples enjoy. On January 29, 2007, following a High Court ruling ordering them to do so, Jerusalem registered its first gay couple.

Advocacy and Activism

Israel has an active LGBTQ community, with well attended annual gay pride festivals held in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem since 1998. Pride events are also held regularly in Haifa, Beer Sheva, and Eilat. Despite virulent protests from fundamentalist religious groups, the World Pride Festival was planned for Jerusalem in August 2005. The festival was postponed due to Israel's pull out from the Gaza Strip, which required the presence of most Israeli police forces and thus left the parade with little to no security. Unlike Tel Aviv, Jerusalem remains a city torn over the presence of LGBTQ people and culture and so, for security reasons, the festival had to be limited in scope. However, the celebration ultimately did take place in the summer of 2006.

Founded in 1997, the Jerusalem Open House provides services and resources to LGBTQ people, including Palestinians. Headquartered in Tel Aviv, with branches throughout the country (Kiryat Shmona, Beer Sheva and Eilat) the Aguda, the only national LGBTQ organization in the Middle East, works to ensure equal rights for LGBTQ Israelis, to educate the public

about the needs of the LGBTQ community, and to provide services and social opportunities for members of the LGBTQ community. In addition to advocacy organizations, individuals have broken ground as openly elected LGBTQ politicians. Chief among these is Uzi Even, the first openly gay member of the Israeli parliament, the Knesset. Even, a member of the Meretz Party, was elected in 2002.

The Social Scene

Day to day life in Israel provides a variety of outlets for LGBTQ people. There are, for example, a number of clubs and bars throughout Israel for the LGBTQ community, with Tel Aviv having the greatest concentration. The Tel Aviv beachfront even contains a section which is nationally known as a hot-spot for gay men and lesbians. In terms of LGBTQ Israeli culture, a number of popular actors and entertainers are out regarding their sexuality. One of the prime examples is Miss Dana International (an out-of-the closet Trans woman), winner of the 1998 Eurovision Song Contest.

Sources

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBTQ_rights_in_Israel
2. <http://www.worldpride.net/index.php?id=1319>
3. http://www.thegully.com/essays/gaymundo/020220_gay_israel_history.html
4. <http://www.gaytelaviv.com>
5. Walzer, Lee. *Between Sodom and Eden*, Columbia University Press, 2000.

would need to investigate and prosecute hate crimes violence against the LGBTQ community.

In other important news, Colorado passed legislation banning workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. This makes Colorado the 20th state to ban workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and the 12th to ban discrimination on the basis of gender identity. Similar laws also exist in California, Connecticut, Maine, New York, and a handful of other states.

The U.S. Military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy has come under much scrutiny in the recent year. Over 11,000 individuals have been discharged since the policy took effect, and it is estimated that it has cost the government upwards of \$190 million for discharges and retraining. Dozens of notable military leaders have publicly challenged the policy, and ruled it as unnecessary. General John Shalikashvili, who was chief of staff under President Clinton when the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy was introduced, even cited Israel's experience in his recommendation to allow homosexuals to openly join the military. Since the early 1990's homosexuals and lesbians have been accepted for military service in the IDF.

The Marriage Debate

The major LGBTQ question of 2006 continued to be the same-sex marriage debate. In both New York and Washington, the highest state courts ruled that there was no right to same-sex marriage. On July 6, 2006, the New York Court of Appeals held in *Hernandez v. Robles* that the decision to recognize or permit same-sex marriages should be left to the legislature, not the court. Twenty days later, The Washington Supreme Court used similar reasoning to uphold the state's Defense of Marriage Act, finding in *Anderson v. King County* that the act passed constitutional muster and that any changes should come through the legislature or the initiative process.

At the same time, 2006 also brought with it certain positive steps as well. In November, Israel's Supreme Court instructed the government to register a same-sex marriage that had been duly performed in Canada. On January 30th, 2007 Jerusalem even registered its first gay couple, Binyamin and Avi Rose. The Roses were married in Canada, and immediately returned to Jerusalem after the marriage.

Similarly, on October 25th, the New Jersey Supreme Court found that refusing to legally recognize same-sex relationships was unconstitutional, but that this could be remedied through civil unions. Spurred by this ruling,

New Jersey enacted and implemented a civil union law that went into effect on February 29th, 2007.

The landscape for LGBTQ Americans also became a little brighter recently when members of the Oregon senate approved the Oregon Family Fairness Act, which establishes domestic partnership for committed same-sex couples. Oregon will be the 10th state to provide significant protections to committed same-sex couples in the form of marriage (Massachusetts), civil unions and domestic partnerships (Vermont, Connecticut, New Jersey, and California), reciprocal beneficiaries law (Hawaii), or other protections (Maine and the District of Columbia). The Washington State domestic partnership law goes into effect on July 22nd 2007 and New Hampshire began recognizing civil unions on January 1st, 2008.

Changes in Judaism's View of LGBTQ People

The Conservative Movement's legal decision-making body, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, approved a bundle of seemingly conflicting statements that addressed homosexuality this past year. The result is great change: opportunities for openly Gay men and Lesbians within the Conservative Movement increased exponentially overnight. A moderately progressive response by Rabbi Elliot N. Dorff, Rabbi Daniel Nevins, and Rabbi Avram Reisner opened the door to the ordination of openly gay and lesbian students and removed many of the objections to same-sex physical relationships. The response still barred anal sex between men, and presented a rather ambiguous response to the question of same-sex religious commitment ceremonies.

The CJLS also adopted two right-wing responses, one by Rabbi Joel Roth and the other by Rabbi Leonard Levy. The Roth response bars homosexual sex and ordination, while the Levy response promotes the possibility of "curing" homosexuality. A fourth response, that of Rabbi Gordon Tucker, was the most far-ranging in its progressive conclusions and would have removed restrictions on same-sex conduct and gay/lesbian professional pursuits across the board. However, because the Tucker response was deemed to be a serious change to Jewish law, it needed to pass a higher vote threshold and ultimately was rejected by the CJLS. Its existence is nonetheless a great contribution to the future freedom of LGBTQ Jews.

The bundle of statements by the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards has opened up a number of doors for the LGBTQ community. Both the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies and the Jewish Theological Seminary have already begun admitting openly gay and lesbian students.

(The Seminario Rabinico in Argentina unofficially chose to retain its policy of exclusion while the Solomon Schechter Institute in Israel led by Rabbi Einat Ramon virulently and publicly rejected the inclusion of gay men and lesbians) The first class of openly gay and lesbian rabbinical and cantorial students in Conservative seminaries includes Ian Chesir-Teran, Marisa James, and Sarah Oberman.

The Reform and Reconstruction Movements had already welcomed the LGBTQ community, and rabbis from both movements perform marriages of same-sex couples as a matter of routine. Currently 15 Jewish LGBTQ congregations flourish across the United States, and rabbis such as openly lesbian Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum have been recognized by Newsweek as one of the top 50 rabbis in the country.

In other important news, JDate began welcoming LGBTQ Jews. The site now offers expanded search capabilities that allow gay men and lesbians to seek matches. JDate began asking people for their gender and the gender of the person they would like to meet, and this allows men to search for men and women to search for women. Although such search capabilities were not part of the original site, it became evident that this was a growing segment of the population, and within one month of the move to include LGBTQ profiles, over 700 such profiles had been added to the site.

Regularly Updated Current Events Websites

General

365gay – www.365gay.com

Advocate – www.advocate.com

gay.com – www.gay.com

GenderTalk – www.gendertalk.com/info/resource.shtml

Political/ Human Rights

Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation – www.glaad.org

Human Rights Campaign – www.hrc.org

Lambda Legal – www.lambdalegal.org

National Center for Transgender Equality – www.nctequality.org

National Gay & Lesbian Task Force – www.thetaskforce.org

Religious Action Center: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Equal Rights – <http://rac.org/advocacy/issues/issuegl>

Transgender Law and Policy Institute – www.transgenderlaw.org

Religion

Jeff Herman Virtual Resource Center – elearning.huc.edu/jhvrc

Jewish Mosaic – www.jewishmosaic.org

Keshet JTS – keshetjts.org

Keshet Rabbis – www.keshetrabbis.org

Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance: Homosexuality – www.religioustolerance.org/hom_chur.htm

WHAT IS AN ALLY?

An ally is a person who supports marginalized, silenced, or less privileged groups without actually being a member of those groups. This person creates a safe and welcoming environment and will often directly confront and challenge systems of oppression. The Human Rights Campaign offers the following definition of an ally to LGBTQQI people: “An ally is someone who is not gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (LGBTQ) but personally advocates for LGBTQ equal rights and fair treatment. Allies are some of the most effective and powerful advocates for the LGBTQ movement. These allies have proven invaluable personally and politically, and are increasingly important in the fight for LGBTQ equality. Indeed, their voices often have been heard while those of LGBTQ people have been ignored.” Being an ally is a process, not a single action. It requires not just a willingness to stand up for others, but also a commitment to learning, examining cultural norms and expectations, and to creating change.

Wikipedia has an entry on being a straight ally: “Straight ally is a colloquial term that describes a heterosexual person who conscientiously supports equal civil rights, gender equality, and LGBTQ social movements. Usually, a straight ally is inclusive of diversity, and may have many gay and lesbian friends. Some organizations, such as gay-straight alliances often consist predominantly of straight ally members.”

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Straight_ally as of 6/4/07).

JEWISH VALUES & BEING AN ALLY

A number of Jewish values fit with the concept of being an ally. Human worth stems from being created in God’s image (**Genesis 1:27 and 5:1**). Rabbinic understanding of this value teaches that an insult to people is an affront to God (**Genesis Rabbah 24,7**). (See the second chapter of Rabbi Elliot Dorff’s excellent book *Matters of Life and Death: Modern Jewish Medical Ethics* for further discussion of this value.)

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SECTION 2

Being An Ally

Rabbi Bruce Bromberg Seltzer

Coming Out on Campus

Rabbi Mychal Copeland

LGBTQ Jewish Students and Mental Health

Rabbi Lina Zerbarini

Putting the T in LGBTQ

S. Bear Bergman

Children of LGBTQ Parents

Rabbi Sharon Stiefel

Queer Jewish Ritual on Campus

Rabbi Jason Klein & Rabbi Mychal Copeland

Challenging the Myth of Biblical Homophobia

Rabbi Michael Rothbaum

Diversity in human appearance, personality, and sexuality are inherently part of God's created world. The Mishnah in Sanhedrin teaches that God's creation of humans from Ha-Adam (the first human) has two implications: Human diversity is an intentional part of God's world and that no one can say that they are better than another since we all ultimately have the same ancestry.

The Torah teaches we "must love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." **Deuteronomy 10: 18–19.** Through exclusion and slurs (queer literally means strange), LGBTQI individuals have been made strangers in the Jewish community.

HOW TO BE AN ALLY:

Being an ally breaks down into two broad areas: Education and creating a safe environment.

I. Education

Education means learning about the struggles and joys associated with being LGBTQI, understanding the terms typically used by LGBTQI people (including what all those letters stand for), and wrestling with stereotypes and other negative messages about LGBTQI people you have internalized. Education also means sharing these learning and struggles with others to create more allies and to support LGBTQI people. A number of resources focusing on being an ally to LGBTQI students are included below and at the end of this section. Remember that familiarizing yourself with local resources and challenges endemic to your particular community (legal and otherwise) is an important job of an active ally.

A. Jewish Mosaic—The National Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity offers such resources as *Torah Queeries* (a weekly Torah commentary from a queer perspective), a glossary of LGBT terms and definitions, a guide to TransRespect 101 and an LGBT Resource Library with hundreds of full-text documents relating to LGBT issues.

B. For a brief overview of the history of LGBTQ issues in the Jewish community and some of the current issues, see "Listen to Her Voice—The Ma'yan Report" pp. 76-82 available online. (Ma'yan—based in the JCC in Manhattan—serves as a catalyst for change and a resource for women working for change within the Jewish community.) http://www.jccmanhattan.org/attach/May_Rep_01.pdf

II. Establishing an Allies Program/Safe Zone:

Here is information on how to create an Allies Program/Safe Zone (including a full text of Establishing an Allies Program). The goal of creating an ally training program is to help yourself, your colleagues, and your student leaders become more welcoming and nurturing to LGBTQ students. In creating such a program it is essential to seek help from local experts trained to deal with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning and intersex individuals. An Ally program at campus should include participants from various campus communities (and potentially reach beyond students to administrators, faculty, and staff). In the last decade, many campus communities have evolved into safer environments for LGBTQ students and their allies. Although each campus is different, a number of potential departments, organizations, and groups may help create a safe Hillel. These may include:

- Office of Residential Life
- Office of Student Services
- Office of the Dean of Students/College
- Office of Multicultural Programming
- Office of Affirmative Action/Office of Ombudsperson
- Office of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Student Life
- Office of Health Education
- Office of Community Service/Engagement.
- A Coalition of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Students
- A Coalition of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Faculty and Administrators
- Faculty (and possibly academic centers or departments) who study gender, sexuality, and other issues touching LGBTQ life.
- Intergroup dialogue organizations/offices

In my own journey as an ally, the hardest thing has to been to recognize the extent to which our society in general and the Jewish communal world in particular are organized around heterosexuality. Here is an article about homophobia in Jewish youth culture (youth groups and camps): <http://www.jvibe.com/jvibrations/issue3/homophobia.shtml> .

III. Hillel as a Safe Zone

An important part of creating a safe space includes visually demonstrating that Hillel is a Safe Zone. There are different ways of accomplishing this depending on the diversity of the Hillel community and the campus itself. Ideas include an LGBTQ resource bulletin board and including non-heterosexual images in artwork. Particular care must be taken to ensure confidentiality of student identity.

Creating a Safe Environment:

- A. Respect how people name and identify themselves.
- B. Use of gender neutral language (e.g. ask a person if he or she is dating anyone instead of asking if he has a girlfriend or if she has a boyfriend.)
- C. Do not assume all people of one gender are attracted to, will date, marry, etc. members of the opposite gender.
- D. Challenge stereotypes (e.g. don't assume that a feminine man or a masculine woman is gay or lesbian. Create opportunities to discuss these assumptions with others.)
- E. Don't expect LGBTQQI people to educate you; take initiative and learn.
- F. Create dialogue (e.g. talk about the importance of LGBTQQI rights and the realities of oppression.)

Individuals and organizations can create Safe Zones and act as allies. If a Hillel professional is unable to make the Hillel a Safe Zone, it is recommended to make one's office a Safe Zone and let students know the professional is an ally.

IV. Attention: Support Wanted

The following are issues that may arise for LGBTQ Jewish students for which allies will be especially appreciated and/or needed. You will notice that many of these issues are probably present, in varying forms, for the whole of the student body. Think about the particular contours of their affects on LGBTQ students.

- **Professors** may disseminate homophobia and/or heterosexism in their classrooms. There is an unbalanced power relationship here and this can be especially stressful.

- **Roommates** may be unwelcoming to LGBTQ students. Remember that a dorm room is a student's home. The presence of homophobia in a student's personal space can be frightening at the worst, and a nuisance at the least. It's hard to be an educator in one's own residence.

- **Local Politics** may affect how safe or happy a student feels. When politicians and classmates debate the legitimacy of LGBTQ lives and rights, students may feel ostracized. Conversely, students may seek an outlet to celebrate victories for equality.

- **Hate Crimes and Bias Incidents** can have a particularly harsh impact on students' mental and physical well-being. Whether its homophobic graffiti, hateful epithets, or physical abuse, LGBTQ students may desire the support of allies when they feel directly or indirectly threatened.

- **Blood Drives** can be a sore point for gay men. Under Red Cross policy, any gay man who has ever had sex cannot donate blood. Allies might strive to recognize this injustice and to support students who feel stymied or frustrated.

- **Dating** can be especially stressful for LGBTQ Jewish students. Often the dating pool of eligible men/women is decidedly small and so anxiety regarding isolation may set in.

V. Letting the People Know

Unless you let your students/peers know that you're an ally, they won't guess. You've got to be proactive here. Do what's comfortable for you, but remember this is not an exercise in passivity, only public declarations will get your message across. Consider the following:

- **Wear a pin, t-shirt, bandana, or sticker** on your person, brief case, back pack, etc. An HRC logo (blue rectangle with a yellow equal sign), a PFLAG emblem, a rainbow, or a "Straight but not Narrow" button are all good choices. If you can't find the apparel you want, make it.

- **Add to your office space.** Think of your door, your wall, your hallway, etc. as places where you can place visual clues to your allyship. If you're certified by a Safe Zone program, put up your sticker. Consider pictures of same-sex couples in Hillel

brochures or on your wall. Think about putting a poster on the wall: the students will notice.

- **Think Virtual.** The signals that students pick up about you will often come from clues you leave online. Think about how to make your Facebook profile, Hillel website, etc. Queer friendly. This might include listing LGBTQ resources on your site, joining a group for allies/equality, or other creative choices.
- **Celebrate and Program!** By offering LGBTQ programs (see that section!) and by celebrating National Coming Out Day (October 11th) Queer Awareness Month (October) and Pride Month (June) with your students you'll let them know that you're available not just for the bad times but for the parties as well.
- **Engage.** The best way to let people know that you're an ally is to tell them. Don't be shy, this is your moment to be out, loud, and proud!

Useful Resources:

Jewish Mosaic-The National Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity: encourages LGBTQ inclusion in Jewish life through visibility, advocacy, education, and research. <http://www.jewishmosaic.org>

National Union of Jewish LGBTQIQ Students: National involvement and other good resources for LGBTQIQ <http://www.nujlsonline.org>

A Community of Frum Gay Jews: Message board, frequently asked questions, and other links. <http://members.aol.com/orthogays>

Becoming a "Kehillah Mekabelet" The Struggles of Transformation An essay published in the JRF Quarterly (Jewish Reconstruction Federation) by Roberta Israeloff about a synagogue's efforts to create an inclusive community. <http://www.jrf.org/rt/transformation.html>

Twice Blessed: Jewish LGBTQ archives of different media sources. <http://www.onearchives.org/twiceblessed/index.html>

Hebrew Union College's Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation, and the Virtual Resource Center on Sexual Orientation Issues in the Jewish Community Requires free registration. Contains FAQ (frequently asked questions) and a glossary in addition to wide-ranging resources in various media. <http://elearning.huc.edu/jhvrc>

Keshet (Boston) Resources:

<http://www.boston-keshet.org/TEXT/Resources.html>

Keshet JTS Resources: A student organization at the Conservative movement affiliated Jewish Theological Seminary (which serves undergraduates through List College, future rabbis through its Rabbinical School, future cantors through its Miller Cantorial School, Jewish educators through its Davidson School of Jewish Education, scholars of all types through its Graduate School, think tanks, and other programs). <http://keshetjts.org/links>

Keshet-Rabbis (Gay Friendly Conservative/Masorti Rabbis & Cantors) hold that LGBTQ Jews should be embraced as full, open members of all Conservative/Masorti congregations and institutions. The website contains a list of participating rabbis and cantors and other resources. http://www.keshetrabbis.org/?page_id=1

Keshetcongregations.org is an organization of Conservative-movement-affiliated congregations and individual congregants in the Conservative Movement who believe that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Jews should have equal rights in our congregations, be able to fully participate in positions of professional and lay leadership, and be ordained as rabbis and cantors through Conservative movement institutions. <http://keshetcongregations.org>

Kulanu (All of Us) – a Reform handbook on lesbian and gay inclusion from 1996. It is currently being rewritten/updated. <http://www.urj.org>

My Jewish Learning - Section on Sex and Sexuality http://www.myjewishlearning.com/ideas_belief/sexsexuality.htm

Shefa Network on LGBTQ Inclusion: A resource page from a group of Conservative Jews dreaming for movement change. <http://www.shefanetwork.org/LGBTQ%20Inclusion.html>

RMIsaac's Gay Jewish Page: <http://www.eskimo.com/~rmisaac/gayjews.html>

18 WAYS TO MAKE LGBTQ STUDENTS FEEL WELCOME IN YOUR HILLEL

this resource was adapted from a model for synagogue use (see below)

- 1 Develop a Shabbat service to educate and sensitize students about gay and lesbian issues. Consider having a panel of students at an oneg to discuss how LGBTQ issues affect their collegiate and personal lives.
- 2 Phrase your Hillel publicity in a way that is inviting to all people. Advertise your Hillel's events at campus LGBTQ hubs and listserves.
- 3 When planning singles' activities, recognize that not all single students are looking for a partner of the opposite gender.
- 4 When working with donors, parents, and board members appreciate that one who appears "single" may have a committed life partner of the same gender.
- 5 Design your community board membership and parent donor forms to be welcoming to a spouse/partner of either gender.
- 6 In community board membership forms and parent donor solicitation, in addition to "single" or "married," offer "committed relationship" as a membership category.
- 7 Be open in your community to sharing in the joy of same gender relationship in the same way you honor opposite sex relationships: acknowledgement, inclusion, etc.
- 8 If it is your custom to celebrate the anniversaries of couples, include same-gender couples in this celebration.
- 9 Substitute "parent(s)/guardian(s)" on your donor school forms, for "mother and father"
- 10 In your Hillel advertising, make sure that the LGBTQ population is specifically welcomed at all events.
- 11 Make sure that LGBTQ students are honored and included at services (i.e., opening the ark, reading a prayer or other passage, or lighting the Shabbat candles).
- 12 Acknowledge homosexual victims of the Holocaust at Yom Hashoah services.
- 13 Include gay and lesbian concerns related to employment rights and benefits, adoption, military service, health issues, etc. in the Hillel's social action agenda.
- 14 Make sure that LGBTQ students are represented on committees and are encouraged to participate fully in Hillel leadership.
- 15 Offer programs for LGBTQ students to draw them closer to your community, to increase understanding, support and awareness for them and to educate and sensitize your Hillel members.
- 16 Include specific LGBTQ content in your every-day social, cultural, and educational programs, i.e. screen and discuss a film such as "Yossi and Jagger" in your Hillel Jewish film festival.
- 17 Make sure to comfort those who have lost a child, parent, or friend to AIDS and encourage them to mourn communally.
- 18 Create a list of community resources serving the LGBTQ community.

Adapted From:
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NOTES

COMING OUT ON CAMPUS

A person's coming out story is part of their life story. As Hillel professionals, we can play a positive role in a student's process during this crucial transition. In addition to campus counseling services and LGBTQ centers on campus, we can be one of the safe-havens for students who are questioning their sexual identity. We become pastoral counselors, leading students through some of the most challenging times of their lives. Students may seek us out because we carry less of a stigma than psychological services on campus, or because they are likely to come to someone they already know and trust. Coming out is linked to spiritual or existential questions that lead students to our door. We are some of the most consistent adults in our students' lives during college. For many, we are more present in their day-to-day experience than their parents during these crucial years and may be far more accessible and non-judgmental. When a student comes out to us, our response can influence the way they cope with their identity shift as well as their lifelong relationship with Judaism.

Social science researchers have explored the psychological stages that make up the coming out process since the late 1970s. Although there is no uniform consensus among researchers on how this process evolves (see references below) there are several patterns that are worth understanding and observing. These patterns are useful in appreciating where a student may be at a given moment of his/her college experience and/or developmental process. According to Dr. Vivienne Cass, identity confusion, comparison, tolerance, acceptance, pride, and synthesis make up the standard six stage coming-out process. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Cass_model). Although this model is a simplified and imperfect understanding of coming out, it will serve as a framework to begin this discussion.

The first stage is a sense of identity confusion over a newfound identity and for some folks, a sense of ensuing isolation. As adolescents or as college students, young people may have developed any number of defense mechanisms to protect themselves from the realization that they may be LGBTQ. Some students have spent years rationalizing their same-sex erotic behavior. They may have played down its significance ("I was just experimenting") or engaged in opposite-sex erotic behavior in order

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to convince themselves of their “straightness.” Other students could be in denial, throwing themselves into academic or other pursuits to avoid dealing with an impending and dramatic identity shift. Such defense mechanisms can lead to serious consequences. If an adolescent represses his/her same-sex desire, when those desires do inevitably emerge, panic may ensue. That panic can pose a significant challenge to an individual’s existing coping strategies. Furthermore, denial, panic, or angst may cause other tasks of adolescent identity formation during these years to be curtailed or postponed until later in life when the student does come out.

After the identity confusion stage, and after comparing personal experiences to the wider context of society and peers, an individual may move towards tolerance, acceptance, and then pride. In the midst of this process an individual reaches a stage of self-recognition which may include disclosure of the self to others. This is often known as coming out. Those who do come out experience greater psychological well being, fewer feelings of guilt and loneliness, less of a need for extensive counseling, and healthier relationships. Even though the average age for coming out, according to one researcher, is as young as 13 for boys and 17 for girls (Savin-Williams, 2006) many students choose to “pass” as heterosexual until they graduate from high school. This waiting period may be a choice to avoid potential pressure or even violence from peers and parents. The final stage of the coming out process is known as identity synthesis. At this time, an individual integrates a queer identity into the rest of the self, seeing this as just one of many aspects of his/her identity.

While these stages may be useful, it is extremely important to note that each individual’s experience is unique and may not follow any particular model. While confusion usually does precede synthesis, the trajectory of each individual should be celebrated in all of its twists and turns, curves and contours. Each person follows his/her own path, based on gender, ethnic background, class, and many other salient factors in overall identity. There is no ideal time to come out. **There is no ideal way to come out. Our job is to be open and most importantly, our job is to listen.**

HOW CAN BEING JEWISH AFFECT COMING-OUT?

A Jewish man in his fifties once laughed as he recounted that when he told members of his family that he was gay, they cried, “Oy-there won’t be any children!” He laughed in part as catharsis because, sadly, he came out at a time when a gay man could not expect to raise children. He also laughed because he recognized that within the Jewish community, emphasis on

offspring (and transmission of tradition through them) seems to supersede any other concerns about one’s child. Contrast this with someone from a Protestant background who upon coming out to parents and grandparents was told that she should never have children.

When dealing with coming out in the Jewish community, we are doubly challenged (or blessed, according to an early and poignant book title, *Twice Blessed*, by Christie Balka and Andy Rose). Jewish LGBTQ people carry a double minority identity which can add a crucial dimension to the coming out process. For some Jews, the perception that a deep seeded prohibition against homosexuality is found in the Torah is the greatest challenge to coming out. For other Jews, text and halachah do not play a central role in their own or their family’s outlook on gay identity. Homophobia is often rooted firmly in Jewish cultural norms that do not necessarily rely on Torah for justification. Some of these cultural norms are shared by other minority cultural groups, such as a fear of extinction as a result of not reproducing, entrenched gender role expectations, and the importance of family as a primary social unit.

For current LGBTQ Jewish college students, coming out could signify a seeming rejection of both family and Judaism simultaneously. When we work with students in the coming out process, we must view the individual as part of many systems- part of a family system, a cultural system, and a religious system. Therefore, any conversation about sexual identity must be explored in the context of class, religion, nationality, geographic region, and family cultural values regarding privacy, sexuality, and relationships. Within the Jewish community we should be aware of the different challenges faced by Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Mizrahi, or Persian LGBTQ students. This is not a uniform process.

For many Jewish students in the process of coming out, the question of procreation is central. This pressure has only increased since the Holocaust. Jews have been told that they must have as many children as possible to replace those who perished. This can manifest itself differently for men and women. Women may have questions about fulfilling a gender-specific role that includes procreation. Men may struggle to reconcile gay culture and the “nice Jewish boy” who wants to settle down and have a family. LGBTQ students of all stripes may struggle to re-envision a future family on their terms rather than those of their ancestors. As Jewish professionals we are uniquely positioned to talk through these challenges and, indeed, these blessings with our students.

PASTORAL COUNSELING

How can we as Hillel professionals be of help to a student coming out?

As pastoral counselors, it may help to see our role as supporters, listening to where a student is rather than forcing an agenda. We can be instrumental in providing spiritual counsel and creating a safe place to talk. In Hebrew, the word “shalom”, peace, comes from a root meaning, “whole”. We are only at peace when we are whole. Our work as pastoral counselors is to help students find wholeness by uniting the seemingly disparate pieces of their lives, helping them to seek out their most authentic selves.

As in all other counseling situations, a student must feel assured that your conversation is private and will not leave the room. Remember that we are not therapists and that if a conversation takes a turn towards the more deeply psychological, we must refer students to the counseling center on campus or to other trained professionals.

When an individual discloses that they are LGBTQ or pondering questions of sexuality, even if this is a new area for the pastoral counselor, **the first response should be uniformly positive and celebratory.** For many individuals who have already disclosed to others, this exciting discovery has been met with tears, rage, or confusion. Even if a student is experiencing challenges related to this revelation, we should contrast negativity with affirmation about whatever it is the student has discovered about him/herself.

Students who are questioning may be comforted to hear that what they are experiencing is completely normal. The feelings they are experiencing are natural. Same-sex attraction has existed in every era of history and in every region of the world. When coming out in the context of Judaism where a student may feel “unnatural”, or that s/he is straying from “normal” family life, such assurances will be especially welcome.

One of the most common errors in this area is failing to recognize where someone is at a given moment in their process. Much contemporary research on coming out stresses that complete disclosure to the self and others is tantamount to a healthy integration of gay identity. However, there is no one way to come out. Some come out as queer, others as questioning, trans or bisexual. Many reveal that they have sexual feelings towards someone of the same sex and may not necessarily link this with a new identity label. **Each person follows their own trajectory, and our role is to reassure the student that whatever that looks like at the present**

moment is totally appropriate. We cannot presume to know what is right for our students. We must be careful not to make assumptions about what is appropriate for students and not to predict what conclusions (if any) they will draw from their questioning. Coming out is a lifelong process and an ongoing one. LGBTQ individuals make decisions about disclosure every day of their lives. For some, even sexuality itself is fluid, so sexual identity may fluctuate over the lifespan. There may be no final answer, no single identity label that endures over a person’s adult life.

Issues of disclosure may be exacerbated in the Jewish community. A student may choose to be out at school but not at home, out to siblings but not to parents or grandparents, out to family but not at synagogue. Some students choose to come out to other LGBTQ students on campus but not at Hillel, or may hide their Jewishness within the LGBTQ community which is often hostile towards religion. Still others may never feel comfortable within the campus LGBTQ community because it may seem to require a wholehearted identification that is uncomfortable for the student. Hence, many LGBTQ Jews note the parallel usage of “coming out” language when referring to both their Jewish and queer identities. Some talk about choosing to “pass” as either straight or non-Jewish in certain realms of their lives. Jewish LGBTQ people may be increasingly comfortable with varying levels of “outness” in different aspects of their lives. It is important to explore and embrace these shades of gray rather than assuming that a student must be out in every facet of his/her life in order to be a healthy, adjusted individual. How widely the closet door is opened is an issue of personal agency; the individual has the choice to keep anything about their lives private. It is important to assure students that making the conscious decision to keep the closet door closed to some people in their lives is indicative of neither weakness nor dishonesty. This decision is theirs and only theirs to make, and there should be no shame in making that choice.

At this age, it is likely that coming out to parents will be a central and sometimes volatile piece of a student’s process. In talking to parents, the student should make sure s/he is truly ready and has thought out the conversation. Conversations should be in person if at all possible, even if this is more difficult emotionally. Students may seek you out when coming out to parents has not gone well. (Hopefully students will also share when coming out was met with warmth and affirmation) Always listen well and tap into empathy reservoirs. Then, it might behoove you to ask the student, “How long have you known about this yourself?” The answer will vary, but most likely it will involve many months or years. Then ask the student how

long his/her parent(s) have known. LGBTQ individuals prepare for and cope with questioning and identity for years, whereas parents are told the news and often expected to deal gracefully with this new information instantaneously. Remind the student that just a s/he needed time to explore and celebrate his/her own sexuality, so too parents may need some time to get used to this brand-new revelation.

Some parents may have already suspected that their children were LGBTQ, others may be surprised by the revelation; parents are as diverse and complicated as their children. Often the revelation is completely counter to how parents envisioned their child's adult life. Although this can be a most painful time-period for a student (and therefore empathy is a must) a reminder that parents have to go through their own process of acceptance is often well-placed. In fact, parents have to come out too. They need to cope with the information themselves, and then decide when, how and to whom they will reveal their child's LGBTQ identity. Eventually most parents do cope with their child's sexual identity revelation, and even those who continually struggle do make progress over time. Since in Jewish families, parents' reactions may be linked to assumptions about the absence of grandchildren or other misconceptions, the student may have to educate their parents about the current realities of LGBTQ life, including the possibilities of parenting if this is something they envision for themselves. Patience and communication can ease the situation.

The keys in helping a student with his/her coming out process are to listen actively, provide empathy, suggest patience, and connect to resources. In relation to the latter of these, it may be appropriate to recommend that the student go to the LGBTQ center on campus or in town so s/he can get connected with resources, classes and groups. It may also be helpful to suggest a ritual to celebrate coming out (See Queer Jewish Ritual on Campus). Finally, helping a student locate an LGBTQ synagogue or Jewish group, or connecting a student with NUJLS online could go a long way in making it clear that they are not alone in the Jewish community. A student should never have to feel the need to choose between the Jewish community and queer identity. As our students come out, it is our job to greet them with open ears and open arms.

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- A Selected Bibliography of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Concerns in Psychology: An Affirmative Perspective
<http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbc/publications/bibliography.html>
- Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists--American Psychological Association
<http://www.apa.org/pi/multiculturalguidelines/references.html>

National Union of Jewish LGBTQ Students
<http://www.nujlsonline.org>

ineffective and potentially harmful (American Psychological Association, *Psychiatric News*, 01-15-1999). Checking all assumptions at the door is a solid choice. Ask questions rather than making assumptions or predictions.

The following are suggested guidelines toward effective and culturally competent treatment with LGBTQ persons.

- Use inclusive language. A presumption of heterosexuality will not help a student feel comfortable with you. Do not ask a male student, "Do you have a girlfriend?" Many LGBTQ consumers will interpret this as a signal that you are unwilling to hear about relationships that fall outside a heterosexual paradigm, and some of them will be silenced. Using more inclusive language, such as "Are you in a relationship?" is a simple change that may have far-reaching results.
- Be aware of subtle signals you may be sending. Nearly all LGBTQ people at some point in their lives have lost or disrupted relationships with friends, family members, or religious communities over disclosure of their sexual or gender identity. As a result, many of them are hypervigilant toward possible clues as to whether a given person may or may not be accepting and supportive of them. The use of routine language such as that in the previous example can unintentionally telegraph a heterosexist point of view. Conversely, hanging even a small pro-LGBTQ flyer in your office, or posting information about LGBTQ resources in your community, may make LGBTQ students feel more welcome and more likely to feel comfortable sharing with you.
- Welcome and normalize LGBTQ disclosures. A tentative disclosure of LGBTQ identity or experience can be welcomed with a simple "I'm glad you told me that." This can be followed with the same kind of questions that would follow upon anyone's mentioning of a relationship or experience, such as "Where did you meet?" or "What is 'insert name' like?" Don't use a gender pronoun until you ask, or until the student establishes gender identity. Showing a LGBTQ student that you are willing to put yourself in his or her shoes (e.g., "That must have really hurt," or "That's great, I'm happy for you!") can have a tremendous effect.
- Your job does not end with the coming out process. Supporting students through the various challenges in their lives, particularly those endemic to LGBTQ life, will be vitally important. (e.g. hurt

feelings following the passage of discriminatory legislation, rude roommates, close-minded teachers, depression from break-ups, celebration of sexual exploration, etc.)

While homosexuality, bisexuality, and transgender identity are certainly not mental illnesses, the stresses caused by society's negative messages, condemnation, and violence can sometimes result in depression and other types of emotional difficulties for LGBTQ persons. Your acceptance and support can be a resource for them. You can also serve as a source of referral to openly LGBTQ or otherwise supportive chaplains, faculty, staff or mental health providers on your campus or in your community. Your awareness of other resources is a great help in and of itself.

RESOURCES:

- **Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Helpline**

Phone: 1-888-340-4528

The national toll-free Gay and Lesbian Helpline is operated by Fenway Community Health Center in Boston. It provides free confidential information, referrals, crisis intervention, and support to callers seven evenings a week. Typical topics include safer sex and coming out.

- **The Gay And Lesbian National Hotline (GLNH)**

<http://www.glnh.org>

Phone: 1-888-843-4564

GLNH is a non-profit organization which provides a vital service to our community by providing nationwide toll-free peer-counseling, information and referrals.

- **The Trevor Project**

<http://www.thetrevorproject.org>

Phone: 1-866-488-7386

A national 24-hour toll-free suicide prevention hotline aimed at gay or questioning youth. The Trevor Helpline is geared toward helping those in crisis, or anyone wanting information on how to help someone in crisis. All calls are handled by trained counselors, and are free and confidential.

new sexes and genders with grace and interest rather than suspicion or interrogation.

2. SOME PRACTICAL WORDS ABOUT TRANS STUDENTS

One of the primary purposes of university, perhaps equal to the endeavor of gaining a higher education, is for students to gain an identity. They arrive, mostly, from the fairly homogenous context of their hometowns and are exposed to a wide variety of possibilities, some of which they embrace and then discard, some of which they recognize as correct for them and take on permanently. It is rarely clear at the outset which is which, and this is equally true of student's explorations in the world of gender. Some will transition from one sex to another. Some will transition from one social gender to another, and some will vary, some will wander, and some will take up a firm position somewhere between genders or somewhat adjacent to gender. Here are a few pieces of practical information for working with students in transition.

a) Changes of name and/or pronoun

Trans students will very often begin the process of social transition by choosing a new name, and announcing a change in the gender pronoun they would prefer you to use.

Learning to call someone by a new name and pronoun is sometimes difficult at first, and everyone recognizes this. Good faith efforts are important – it really is a big deal to try your utmost to remember to speak and refer to trans students as they prefer, whether or not they are present. You will certainly make mistakes; correct yourself (or accept the correction with a simple, but honest apology) and then continue the business at hand.

Good things to say when you mis-pronoun a trans-person:

- I'm sorry.
- I'll try harder.
- Thank you for being patient with me.

Problematic things to say when you mis-pronoun a transperson:

- I can't help it, you still look so much like a boy/girl. (Not the transperson's problem Keep trying.)

- Is it really that important to you? (It is the first definitive statement of a new gender a transperson is able to make so - yes, absolutely.)

- You can't really expect people to call you [pronoun of choice] so soon. (In fact, ze [gender neutral for he/she] can. Try harder.)

You may also want to consider offering a way for students who have settled on a new name to finalize and/or formalize that within Hillel, if that student gives permission. Creating or adapting some sort of small ceremony or speech for a student's first aliyah with the new name, making an announcement in a newsletter or email, or a visit to a mikveh may all be appropriate to mark the occasion of a student's new name. (See Queer Jewish Ritual on Campus)

b) Using of Restrooms

With gender change usually comes a desire to stop using the restroom designated for a person's previous gender. For some students, this will be a choice to use the other gender-designated restroom, and for some students it will be more comfortable to use a non-gendered restroom – does your Hillel have one? Could you choose to make one of your restrooms gender-neutral?

Many transpeople, especially those transitioning 'in place' – that is, making a change among known people – appreciate an opportunity for a transitional period with regard to restroom usage, and the gender-neutral restroom offers this. If you're not sure it's worth the trouble, remember this: if a student cannot comfortably use a restroom at your Hillel, they will not attend services, meals, or events unless they feel certain they can avoid the restroom for the entire time. There is a very real chance that this issue could cause you to lose the participation of your trans and/or genderqueer students, so you are encouraged to be thoughtful about whether it is worth doing.

There may be comments or questions from students about why someone they formerly knew as Heather is somehow, suddenly, Herschel, and in the men's bathroom (or vice versa).

Some things you might say to explain this phenomenon:

- Heather is living as a woman now, and will be using the ladies' facilities from now on.

- You might talk to Herschel about it, but I can tell you that he prefers to be seen and understood as a man.

Complaints that this is weird should be acknowledged (“Yes, it’s new to me, too,”) and books, films, or other educational opportunities should be recommended or scheduled. Students who complain that it’s ‘creepy’ or other kinds of derogatory comments need to be met with a firm reminder about Hillel’s policies with regard to inclusion and tikkun olam. Imagine that you have just been told by a student that she prefers not to have to eat at the same table as African-Americans, and modify your reply appropriately.

c) Trips and Retreats

Trans students in educational settings often end up getting assigned the ‘tranny single’ by default, under the assumption that trans students cannot be housed appropriately except with other trans students. University policies with regard to this are widely varied, so this manual will merely suggest the following two courses of action. First, when possible, trans students may be encouraged to select their own roommates in advance. If you are housing people who are not known to one another, ‘gender-blind’ housing options – in which students tick a box if they are willing to be housed with another student/other students of any or all genders – are a wonderful option. Those students can be assigned (as the numbers work out) to make sure that trans students can have the same invaluable roommate/shared housing experiences as their peers.

3. COUNSELING AND ADVISING TRANS STUDENTS

a) Making a Safe Space

Students will discuss trans issues with you if and when they know that you are open and available for that.

Some useful ways to do that are:

- Schedule an LGBTQ film week, and show some trans films.
- Invite authors, artists, or scholars who can speak about trans issues in a Jewish context.
- Purchase, and display, books about transgender/transsexual topics in your office
- Discuss, and ask for students’ thoughts regarding, current issues related to transfolks. Bonus points if some of those

current issues are not about violence/murder (try ifge.org for news and updates).

b) Spiritual Guidance

Many trans students may be struggling mightily with the issue of their transsexual/transgender inclinations. Some of this may be related to worries about parental disapproval, some to a sense of distress about religious community, some about what peers or romantic partners will think – much like any other substantial issue that comes up for college students. But as Jewish educators with the charge of nurturing Jewish identities and Jewish souls, it is paramount that you also give your attention to your students’ spiritual concerns. Many transgender or transsexual Jews live with a great deal of fear that they will no longer be able to participate in Jewish religious life or life-cycle events, that they won’t be accepted in their Jewish communities, or that G-d will be disappointed in them. Do your best to be especially sensitive to these fears, and reassure students as best as you are able.

c) Not Every Issue Is Related To ‘The Trans’

Just a note: trans students have a similar array of difficulty adjusting to college, anxiety about Organic Chem, romantic troubles, worry about finding jobs, and so on. While some of these things can be complicated by being transgender or transsexual, sometimes the problem of the day is just not about the person’s gender.

4. HALAKHAH AND RITUAL

a) Balancing Needs Of Trans Students Against Needs Of Religiously Observant Students

Where most students’ mild initial discomfort about trans students or trans issues is largely based on ignorance or unfamiliarity which can be overcome with information and counseling, there are some students whose issues will be created in what they perceive as a conflict between their observance and trans students. This is most likely to crop up around sex-segregated spaces (like bathrooms), mechitzah (physical barrier between men and women in the synagogue), kol isha (prohibition of a man listening to a woman singing) and students who are shomer negiah (prohibition against physical contact between members of the opposite sex). Mediating some of these issues in a way that feels fair and respectful to all is probably the biggest challenge for Hillel staff.

Most of the available responsa related to transsexuals and transgender people follow a similar and traditionally Jewish argument – the law is interpreted by what is visible to the observer. In the course of eating we do not worry that a molecule of treyf may have floated through the air and landed on our dinner – it is not incumbent upon us to worry about that. If we are keeping kosher, we make a careful choice about where our food is being prepared and then we eat without worry, knowing we are only responsible for the good faith effort of normal discourse. Likewise, a compelling case can be made for treating someone, in terms of gender-based questions – like those of a mechitzza, or relative to kol isha – in their social gender. The normal level at which we make decisions about gender are related to what we can observe in our ordinary actions, and so no underwear-checks or chromosomal tests are necessary or even desirable, as we do not apply that standard to all people. The responsibility is to adhere to the spirit of the law, to not allow one’s self to be distracted by sexual desire, and (questions of sexual orientation aside) living, working, and studying alongside transpeople does not in any way cause conflict with this halakhic requirement.

Obviously, questions related to niddah and especially to students who are shomer negiah will have to be handled individually, and with sensitivity. The good news in this case is that your students can make their own, individual decisions about what makes them comfortable, or feel appropriate, within their own boundaries about touching or interacting with others. That said, policing disclosure or action are strongly discouraged – your frum student can no more be required to touch a trans student as though he were a man than your trans student can be required to tell everyone she used to be a man. Jewish law offers us a great deal of latitude for both our good intentions and also our self-preservation – if it helps, think of some trans students’ choice not to disclose in the context of pikuach nefesh, a decision made which may technically be problematic but which serves to save the life of that student and allow him or her to live, in the world, as a Jew (as opposed to following the unfortunate path of so many trans students who take their own lives).

Finally, offer a reminder that the word halakhah comes from the Hebrew root hey-lamed-kaf, meaning to go or walk, and that halakhah can be translated, literally, as a path that one walks. We have been given even a word for law that not only allows for but in fact requires movement, and it is incumbent upon us as Jews to move- when the time for movement is upon us – with rachmones, with compassion.

b) And What, Exactly, Do We Do With Our Genderqueer or Gender-Questioning Students?

This is a good question, and not one with an easy answer. Genderqueer/ gender-questioning students, who may choose to live without a recognizable social gender, do pose problems within Jewish law, but they are old, old questions and have been chewed over by great minds for some centuries. Gender transgressive Jews, as scholar and activist j wallace writes, “are not a new phenomenon, and accepting gender-transgressive Jews into our communities and families, while unfortunately a radical act, is a radical act with a long history.”

In the Mishnah, the androgynos—the person with unclear genitalia and/or gender—is a subject of debate, with differing opinions about whether this person can marry, and to whom; as well as such practical matters as that person’s slave price, sexual fluids, and so on. Regardless, debate is active, as the conversation at your Hillel will likewise, likely, be active. Make your decisions based on the people involved, on the needs and desires of your own group of actual students, and feel confident that you are well within the spirit of Jewish law in welcoming discussion that is respectful to all involved. Every Hillel has (and is), in its way, its own minhag – aim for your own solution, and aim for a solution which focuses as much on the comfort on your gender-transgressive students as on your normatively-gendered ones.

c) The Prime Directive

At the end of the day, it is the mandate of Hillel to provide a place for Jewish students to maintain, or strengthen, their ties to Judaism while in college. This is always a balancing act, and we acknowledge that not all policies or decisions will make all people happy – but that, too, is nothing new to Hillel nor, certainly, to Jews. As a people, as a faith, we know how to disagree and still be a tribe, that our arguments are nurturing, delicious, and a way to create more – more knowledge and learning and understanding, not less.

It is important that no student is ever called upon to justify hir (gender neutral for him/her) existence - “Why do you have to be such a stickler about the rules!?” is no more or less acceptable a question than “Why can’t you just be a normal girl!?” But it is also a present and necessary place of conversation at Hillel in this moment in Judaism, just as we debate Zionism and the question of Palestine, anti-war sentiments and the US invasion of Iraq, women’s reproductive rights, and any number of other questions, so too can we engage with the issues of transgender/transsexual students in

ways that are both welcoming and spirited, that offer all opinions a place in the conversation and some kind of solution to every question. Students may yet choose not to attend Hillel for any number of political, religious, or other reasons. Nonetheless, it is our job as Hillel organizations to try to make every Hillel as welcoming and inclusive as possible as the world changes, and we change with it.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (SEE ALSO QUEER JEWISH RITUAL ON CAMPUS)

A Blessing for Gender Transitioning, by Rabbi Elliot Rose Kukla

This blessing may be recited before any moment in the transitioning process:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמַּעֲבִיר לְעוֹבְרִים

Blessed are You, Eternal One, our God Ruler of Time and space, the Transforming One to those that transform/transition/cross over.

This blessing takes the same form as classical blessings that mark wondrous occasions. “The Transforming One” as a name for God appears in the traditional blessings of gratitude that are recited each morning. The Hebrew verb root of this word, *avar*, has multiple layers of meaning within Judaism. Most literally it means to physically cross over, however it also involves spiritual transformation in High Holiday prayers. It lies at the root of the word *Ivrim*, Hebrew people. We are the *Ivrim*, the crossing over people, because we physically crossed over the Jordan River to escape from slavery and oppression and spiritually transformed ourselves. At its core, our ancestral sacred memory holds this moment of painful and yet redemptive physical and spiritual transition. In modern Hebrew, this same verb root is used to form the word *ma’avar*, which means to transition genders.

Afterwards recite:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁעָשִׂי בְּצַלְמוֹ וּבְכַרְצוֹנָהּ.

Blessed are You, Eternal One, our God Ruler of Time and Space who has made me in His image and according to Her will.

The second blessing is also taken from morning liturgy. It is based on the book of Genesis, which teaches that male and female bodies were equally created in God’s image. That Midrash, classical Jewish exegesis, adds that Adam HaRishon, the first human being formed in God’s likeness, was an androgynos, an intersex person. Hence our tradition teaches that all bodies and genders are created in God’s image, whether we identify as men, women, intersex or something else. When we take physical or spiritual steps to more honestly manifest our gender identities we are fulfilling the foundational mitzvah, religious commandment, to be partnered with God in completing the work of creation.

Excerpt from Even Bohan, Kalonymus ben Kalonymus

(translation by Tova Rosen)

Kalonymus ben Kalonymus wrote book of poems and prayers called the *Even Bohan* in 1322, and while living in Spain, and it has been preserved and translated repeatedly in that time. Most of the early translations of this particular poem were doggerel, rhyming silliness meant to underscore the ridiculousness of the idea that a male might want to live as a female. In later years, a few yearningly lyrical translations, particularly one by Richard Chess, have been made more popular as awareness of trans issues has grown. This translation, from Tova Rosen, splits the difference – it is straightforward and literal, neither trivializing nor romanticizing but simply reporting the content. It is included here as an early reference to the desire to transition, in part to combat the charge that transsexuality is a modern phenomenon.

Our Father in Heaven!

You who did miracles to our fathers by fire and water;

you who turned [the furnace] in Ur of the Chaldees [cold] to stop it from burning [Abraham];

you who turned Dinah in her mother’s womb [into a girl];

you who turned the rod [of Moses] into a serpent in front of tens of thousands;

you who turned [Moses’] pure arm into a [leper’s] white arm;

you who turned the Red Sea into land, and the sea floor into solid and dried-up earth;

you who turned the rock into a lake, the cliff into a fountain

- if only you would turn me from male to female!

If only I were worthy of this grace of yours,

I could have now been the lady of the house, exempt from military service!

Why cry and be bitter if my Father in Heaven so decreed and crippled me with this immutable, irremovable defect?

Worrying about the impossible is [indeed] an incurable pain for which no empty consolation will help.

I keep telling myself, "I shall bear and suffer until I die."

But since I have learned from oral tradition that

"one should bless [God] for the good as well as for the bad,"

I bless Him meekly, with a faint voice:

Blessed art Thou who did not make me a woman.

Tzitz Eliezer

Rabbi Eliezer Yehuda Waldenberg (1915-2006)

(with additional commentary by j. wallace)

Volume X, Part 25, Chapter 26, Section 6, is the end of a responsum

dealing with transplants, particularly heart transplants. In this section, Rabbi Waldenberg sets out to deal with "other significant/organic alterations of the body, such as a person who changes from male to female, or vice versa." He mentions that such surgery is done in special cases, adding the comment, "rare, of course."

In this responsum, Rabbi Waldenberg cites sources on women who changed into men. Exactly how the phenomenon in question was manifested isn't explicit from what he writes. It is clear, however, that to the naked eye, a person or persons who were female by appearance became male by appearance. Discussing whether such a person, if married, would require

a writ of divorce from his/her husband, one of the sources cited by Rabbi Waldenberg writes that he/she does not, "because this woman has many signs of being a man which are apparent to the visual sense, she does not require a writ of divorce, because she is truly a man."

The source continues to say that in the morning blessings, where a man says, "Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has not made me a woman," such a man should end the blessing instead, "Who has changed me into a man" (Rabbi Waldenberg states elsewhere that a male who becomes female would say, "Who has changed me according to His will," rather than the standard, "Who has made me according to His will," which is said by women

Rabbi Waldenberg discusses the strange case mentioned in the Bible, of Elijah the prophet ascending to heaven. According to Jewish tradition, Elijah was transformed into an angel. During the middle ages, the question was asked whether Elijah's wife would have been permitted to remarry, since her husband had neither died nor divorced her. The conclusion was that since a woman is barred from remarrying so long as she is a man's wife, and in this case she was no longer a man's wife, but an angel's wife (a status which doesn't exist in Jewish law), her marriage would be automatically nullified. Rabbi Waldenberg states that the same would be the case if a man becomes a woman, as the wife of a woman is not a recognized status in Jewish law.

Rabbi Waldenberg's responsum makes it abundantly clear that by his reckoning a change of sex which results in the individual appearing mostly of a new gender actually changes that individual's gender in the eyes of Jewish law.

through assisted reproductive technologies such as alternative insemination or surrogacy. Others are adopted. While some children may be very open in talking about their origins, others may be put off by such questions, perhaps tired of being viewed as a curiosity item in a freak show.

The legal relations children have to both LGBTQ parents will vary. Some states allow the non-biological or non-legal parent in a same sex couple to do what is called a second parent adoption. This allows both LGBTQ parents equal legal status vis-à-vis the child. In cases of divorce or where second parent adoptions are not possible, one of the parents may not have legal rights. While college students usually are over 18, legally there may be limited information available to a non-legal parent about their child.

In terms of the Jewish community, children of LGBTQ parents may face questioning both from their peers and their teachers or campus professionals. Hillel is a pluralistic environment. It is possible for a child of LGBTQ parents to have been raised in a religious community which has always been open and welcoming to LGBTQ families. Now, for the first time at college they may become part of a religious community which includes students who are uncomfortable or intolerant based on Jewish beliefs. Students with LGBTQ parents may never have had to defend their family's legitimacy from a Jewish perspective. Furthermore, consider these possible situations: An Orthodox student whose mom and dad divorced because the mom is a lesbian and now involved in a same-sex relationship. Does the student decide to reveal that information? Or during the Torah service, a student comes forward and tells the gabbai that he or she is the son or daughter of two women or two men. Perhaps the gabbai is caught off guard and fumbles, or worse, changes the names because it doesn't make sense.

LGBTQ families can be as complex as all other families. Divorces and break-ups occur among same-sex couples at the same rate as among straight couples. Parenting may go on with former partners and there may be multiple step parents. In the case of a transgender parent, a mom might become a second dad, or a dad may become a second mom. With bisexual parents, someone may have been raised for part of their life by a same sex couple and then by a heterosexual couple. The permutations are many and the significant parental figures in a student's life may be numerous. What is most important is being open and interested in our students' lives and understanding the variety of family situations.

Perhaps the biggest misunderstanding the children of LBG T families face is regarding their own sexual orientation. Their chance of being LGBTQ is no different than the chances of any child being LGBTQ. "Studies by

a number of reputable scientific journals including the American Journal of Psychiatry, the Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry and Child Development indicate that there are no significant differences between children raised by LGBTQ parents and children raised by straight parents, including the areas of gender identification, self-esteem and sexual identity." (<http://www.civilrightsnow.org/parenting.html>)

Abigail Garner, author of *Families Like Mine*, has coined a term "queerspawn" for the children of LGBTQ parents. Garner also uses the phrase "culturally queer, but erotically straight" to describe many kids, like her, who have grown up with a gay parent and are heterosexual in their sexual orientation. Garner says, "it acknowledges that for me, my sexual orientation, to the best of my knowledge, is heterosexual, but I have taken on the gift and challenges that come with my heritage. Because I was raised by gay parents, I see the world through a queer lens and bring that with me into my adulthood." (http://www.hrc.org/Template.cfm?Section=Betty_DeGeneres&CONTENTID=19089&TEMPLATE=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Garner, Abigail. 2004. *Families Like Mine: Children of Gay Parents Tell It Like It Is*. New York: HarperCollins.
- COLAGE: Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (www.colage.org)
- Rainbow Rumpus, an online magazine for kids with LGBTQ parents (www.rainbowrumpus.org)
- Rainbow Families is one of many local organizations that works in communities to support LGBTQ parents and their children. (www.rainbowfamilies.org)

What makes a ritual Jewish? Sometimes we derive a sense of authenticity simply because we are Jewish and we are participating in the ritual. While it is fair to ask questions about boundaries and syncretism, we know from our history that yesterday's Greek symposium can become today's setting for a Passover Seder. Our willingness to pioneer, to stretch our limits, might be among the sources for the most powerful, meaningful, and authentic rituals for the next generation. Feminist scholars have empowered us to be our own "ritual experts." One never knows whether today's innovation will be become tomorrow's tradition.

Since the college classroom stretches from the lecture hall to the residence hall to our students' self-reflections to the way they connect with others, experimenting with ritual—ancient, contemporary, and in-between—is a natural process to bridge the growth from convocation until commencement.

What makes queer Jewish ritual? Sometimes it is as simple as Jewish ritual performed by queer Jews or in queer communities, such as a Friday night service in an LGBT synagogue. Sometimes it is a reworking of a Jewish tradition to make it more accessible and meaningful to LGBT Jews, such as an addition of a reading about the Stonewall rebellions to a Passover Seder or the changing of "bridge and groom" to "bride and bride" at a lesbian wedding. Additionally, it might be a more thorough reconstruction of Jewish tradition altogether when the tradition seems particularly sexist, queer-unfriendly, or heterosexist to contemporary eyes, such as a same-sex couple reworking the entire Jewish wedding ceremony or the concepts behind a Jewish wedding so that it loses most every trace of its roots as an economic transaction wherein a woman is acquired by a man.

What makes queer Jewish ritual? In the above examples it began as Jewish ritual that has in some way become queered. The reverse—queer rituals that become Judaized—may be the case less of the time, perhaps because Jewish communities and Jewish tradition seem so ancient, but we suspect that we will see this more and more. Examples of this, however, range from the personal—such as blessings for coming out—to the communal—such as a group of Jews' annual breakfast at a certain restaurant before they march in the gay pride parade or New York City's LGBT synagogue Congregation Beth Simchat Torah's annual addition of Hallel to Shabbat services on the eve of Gay Pride.

Hillel's new strategic plan, adopted in 2006, recognizes both distinctive Jewishness and universal humanness in our students. Likewise, members of the LGBT community have distinctive queerness and universal humanness.

Many Jews and LGBT-identified people report some tension in their experience between "we are just like you and want to be totally accepted, valued, and celebrated" and "we are not like you and have distinctive experiences and needs." For LGBT Jews, the extra identity doubles the stakes. For Hillel professionals serving millennial LGBT Jews, the extra identity might double our challenge in meeting the needs of these students but it also doubles our opportunities to meet them where they are.

COMING OUT: A COMMON THREAD

When lesbian, bisexual, gay, or transgender people acknowledge their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, they are said to have "come out of closet" or "come out." This "coming out" is mirrored in our sages' injunction to "remember the coming out of Egypt all the days" of our lives and places the journey from oppression to liberation front-and-center in the Jewish narrative. The Jewish act of telling stories, the remembrance of the Exodus story every day, and the special re-telling of it on Passover has special resonance for LGBT-identified people since our narratives always include coming out stories. The Exodus narrative also urges us to move from mitzrayim (Hebrew for "Egypt," literally, "a constricted place") to a life of freedom. Indeed, Rebecca Alpert writes:

Coming out is the central rite of passage for lesbians and gay men. It marks a change of identity and also a change of status in the world. Like other life passages, it is both exciting and dangerous.

Like our people who created a collective self-identity, a collective sense of time from the Exodus forward, LGBT people often feel a sense of coming into one's true self, one's whole self, or even a sense of rebirth when they come out to themselves or to others.

But just as the biblical book of Exodus is not the end of the story, neither is coming out just an end unto itself. Just as Jews gather together with those whom they hold dear to tell and retell the story of the Exodus, LGBT-identified people share their coming out stories with those whom they hold dear. Sharing coming out stories is a familiar getting-to-know-you ritual for LGBT people. And just as when Jews celebrate Passover we are not merely looking at the past but we are reaffirming our commitment to fight oppression everywhere; coming out stories are reaffirming our personal truths, and our journeys toward empowerment. Jews and LGBT-identified people then, share storytelling and coming out as our rituals par excellence.

THE CAMPUS

The college campus is an environment filled with challenges and opportunities for all students. Many students are away from home for the first time, learning and often living with peers, and always expected to take on some new levels of adult responsibility. Like all Jewish students, queer Jews will be faced with a variety of opportunities to embrace or not to embrace their Jewish selves and connect with the Jewish community in college. Students who are queer-identified also have to deal with coming out—often for the first time—always in a new environment. Evolving class schedules and living arrangements over the semesters ensures that coming out is never a one-time process, it is an ongoing one, much like Jewish tradition regards the ongoing work of creation: Who, in goodness, renews every day and always the work of creation.

הַמְחֲדָשׁ בְּטוֹבוֹ בְּכָל יוֹם תְּמִיד מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית

As Hillel professionals we can view these dual identities as a challenge for engagement, but we might also use it as an engagement opportunity. Will our LGBT-identified students just come out, or will we help them to make coming out a meaningful Jewish experience, one that will enrich their lives indelibly and will enrich the community around them?

OLD JEWISH RITUALS IN NEW QUEER JEWISH CONTEXTS

Blessings

Since biblical times the idea of acknowledging praise on specific occasions has been central to Jewish ritual observance. From offering thanksgiving for the food we eat to acknowledging new and unusual experiences, Jewish tradition challenges us to say one hundred blessings—to pause for one hundred moments of gratitude to something bigger than ourselves—each day. The same prayer-book instructs the reader to say “upon seeing exceptionally strange-looking people or animals”:

Among the traditional blessings is one that the Artscroll Mesorah prayer-book instructs the reader to say “upon seeing exceptionally beautiful people, trees, or fields”: Blessed are You, Holy One our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has such of these in Your world.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׂפָכָה לוֹ בְּעוֹלָמוֹ.

The same prayer-book instructs the reader to say “upon seeing exceptionally strange-looking people or animals”: Blessed are You, Holy One our God, Ruler of the Universe, who varies creatures.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, מִשְׁנֵה הַבְּרִיּוֹת.

While perhaps perception is in the eye of the beholder, the existence of these blessings reminds us that diversity of creation and of humanity in particular, is something worth our attention and affirmation.

Examining the “berachot/blessings” sections of a traditional prayer book reveals that, for around two thousand years, Jewish tradition has included blessings for the functioning of our bodies, for putting on new clothing, for surviving a traumatic experience, for reflecting on a miraculous experience at a particular time and place. It is hardly a stretch to revalue these blessings to explicitly celebrate sexuality, dress, coming through a difficult time, and remembering anniversaries of sheer joy many of which will resonate with our LGBT Jewish students trying new things, struggling with who they are, and being thankful for times of connection, of acceptance, and of celebration. In revaluing ritual, it may be helpful to be aware that Jews from more traditional backgrounds may be wary about “taking God’s name in vain,” functionally, saying the complete text of a traditional blessing on an occasion that is not the traditionally prescribed occasion. This has been handled historically in Jewish communities (when uncertainty exists about whether it is appropriate to say a certain blessing on a certain occasion) by just using the word “Baruch” rather than the customary six-word opening that includes more explicit references to God.

Examples of how we might encourage our students to use traditional blessings:

A student might recite the “shehecheyanu” blessing each time the student comes out to someone new: Blessed are You, Holy One our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us tot his occasion.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁהַחֲיֵנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעְנוּ לְזַמַּן הַזֶּה.

A student might recite the traditional blessing customarily said upon wearing a new item of clothing when s/he puts on an article of clothing for the first time that feels right for that student (maybe at “home,” that student was not allowed to wear certain things; maybe the student is asking questions about gender identity). Blessed are You, Holy One our God, Ruler of the Universe, who clothes the naked.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, מְלַבֵּשׁ עֲרֻמִּים.

A student might recite the blessing customarily said when visiting a place in which one experienced something miraculous when visiting the park in which one came out to one’s grandmother or upon the anniversary of coming out to one’s parents. Blessed are You, Holy One our God, Ruler of the Universe, who did a miracle for me at this place.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה לִי נֶס בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה.

A student struggling with how other people choose to express their sexual orientation or gender identity—the student who might say, “I mean, I’m gay too, but I don’t flaunt it,”— might recite the following blessing when meeting someone who expresses sexual orientation or gender identity differently than the student. The blessing can become a meditation for working on the student’s own internalized homophobia while acknowledging each of us is special. Blessed are You, Holy One our God, Ruler of the Universe, who varies creatures.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, מְשַׁנֵּה הַבְּרִיּוֹת.

Students studying queer history or literature might say a blessing similar to the blessing over Torah study, for that too is part of our particular inherited sacred wisdom for someone queer-identified. Blessed are You, Holy One our God, Ruler of the Universe, who sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us to immerse ourselves in the words of Torah.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעִסוֹק בְּדַבְּרֵי תוֹרָה.

Havdalah

Like the blessings that acknowledge the diversity within creation, Havdalah—the concept of distinction between Shabbat and the other days of the week and the ritual that marks that distinction on Saturday night—is a time that feels natural to acknowledge distinctions and to ask for protection. As Jewish liturgy evolved, the liturgy of Saturday night distinguished itself from other weekday nights by incorporating Psalm 91, a Psalm about being protected into most versions of the prayer book. It was and is a recognition that going from the familiar to the unknown, from Shabbat to the week ahead, from the safe space of one’s community to the broader world, is anxiety-provoking. In 1998, students at the second annual LGBT Jewish student leadership Shabbaton which took place at the University of Michigan put together a ritual of strength and empowerment for Havdalah that gathered participants in a circle, interspersed recitations of queer hopes and dreams with greetings to Elijah the prophet. In 2001, students at the fifth annual conference sponsored by NUJLS (the National Union of Jewish LGBTIQ Students) which took place at Yale University, reworked the ritual, but asked those who would like to “come out” to stand in the middle of the circle holding the ritual items (wine, spices, and candle) for Havdalah. When the candle was extinguished the group in the center stepped on a glass and those around them danced around them celebrating with words of siman tov u’mazal tov for their commitment to live their lives openly. The blessings of havdalah need not be limited by the four in the prayer book. The mi sheberach born of a blessing (see below) may be appropriate in these settings.

Purim

Purim, like Passover, is a holiday for which coming out is a central theme, only here it is Esther’s personal coming out, not a communal coming out. Queen Esther remains closeted about her Jewish status until a strategic moment when she comes out to the king and pleads on behalf of herself and her people. The reading of the Megillah, the Scroll of Esther, is a ritual that recalls this story and raises the question of strategy: is it better to be blatantly open about who we are all the time or might it be better at times to conceal it and reveal it at the perfect moment?

The themes of masking and unmasking and long-time tradition of dressing in costume lend themselves to drag. The text's notion of "nahafoch hu," that everything "turned upside down," is a lesson about life's impermanence and teaches us not to take ourselves too seriously. The blatant sexuality of the biblical text invites shpieling "ad lo yada," without limits. Ariel Naveh points out that the traditions around Purim drunkenness can be a good source of conversation about drug use, particularly in the gay male community in which the use of methamphetamines ("Crystal Meth" or "Tina") has been on the rise in recent years and has led to more and more unsafe sex.

Passover

Studies show that Passover is the most widely celebrated of Jewish holidays. As we discussed above, Passover can lie as the cornerstone of queer LGBT experience. Because Passover is filled with home observances beyond any other holiday, students who do not go home for Passover for logistical reasons may be missing a significant part of their family life. Students who choose not to go home for Passover when they could have may be sending a message about their comfort at home or lack thereof. On campus, a Seder on one of the first two nights of the holiday could maintain a traditional structure and content, but could also invite sharing (such as appending contemporary plagues to the list of ten: poverty, homophobia, etc.) or could be more explicitly thematically geared—a freedom Seder that broadens themes of liberation to many groups or a queer Seder that tells the ongoing story of queer liberation alongside the structure of the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt. After the first night or two of the holiday, the remaining nights lend themselves to additional Sedarim, so that if students have returned home for the beginning of the holiday, they may still be able to celebrate this holiday with their new found "campus family" as well.

The history of the Passover Haggadah reveals that we evolve personally and communally in how we tell our stories. The bare-bones Haggadah in Mishnah Pesachim chapter 10 reveals a story that moves from oppression to liberation but contains few details of the story. The haggadah will grow in time to include evolving questions and commentaries upon commentaries.

There are different ways of telling the same story. Just as Genesis opens with two different accounts of the creation of the world, on the Seder night, it is customary to tell the story from two different perspectives. A Night of Questions teaches us that "the rabbinic sage Samuel began with physical enslavement: We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt" while "the rabbinic sage

Rav began with spiritual degradation: "From the beginning, our ancestors worshipped idols." The traditional Passover ritual can model for queer Jews that sometimes we tell our stories as stories of political liberation and sometimes we tell our stories as stories of personal triumph.

The original Passover in Egypt, the celebration before the Exodus also sends a powerful message that Passover is, by its nature, anticipatory. We do not merely recall the Exodus, we, like our ancestors celebrating in Egypt, look forward to future liberations. Likewise, when we tell our coming out stories, we do not merely recall our own stories, we look toward a day when all people can openly proudly celebrate themselves.

Kiddush Levanah

Kiddush Levanah, the sanctification of the moon ceremony performed on a clear night between the third day of the new lunar month and the full moon, is a ritual of protection, a ritual of restoring balance to the Universe. Rabbi Steven Greenberg has pointed out that these themes might make Kiddush Levanah an appropriate backdrop for a same-sex commitment ceremony. The midrashic underpinning of the ceremony is the idea that the moon and the sun were once equal sizes and only afterward did the sun become the dominant celestial body. The core of the ceremony is a blessing for the renewal of months. During the ceremony, traditionally performed with a minyan, we greet one another with the words "shalom alechem" and dance before the moon, jumping to reach it. The fact that we cannot is a metaphorical hope that neither will our enemies be able to reach us and do us any harm. Psalms 150 and 121 round out the ceremony with their words of celebration and protection. The ceremony ends with a hope that the diminution of the moon will be restored so that the sun and the moon will once again be "two great lights" as they were at creation. In 2001, Rabbi Jason Klein set the ceremony to be used as a coming-out ritual in which the ritual is embellished with explicit words of queer storytelling and empowerment.

Introduction: If the group is unfamiliar with the ritual, the celebrant or officiant, may explain Kiddush Levanah as a traditional Jewish practice and introduce the notion of the moon's own coming out of hiding each month. The Hebrew texts (and English translations) can be found within traditional Kiddush Levanah ceremonies in most siddurim. For example, Kol HaNeshamah, Siddur Sim Shalom (p.704), The Complete Artscroll Siddur (p. 612-617), and Siddur Kol Eliyahu will all be appropriate sources for the texts named below.

1. Psalm 148 may be read in Hebrew or sung in Hebrew or English

2. Some may recite “Lshem Yichud...” a Kabbalistic intention here.

For the union of the blessed Holy One with all that is divine within the world, in awe and reverence of the task of bringing harmony and perfect oneness all the ways that God is manifest in speech and deed, and in the name of all the people Israel, hereby we come to say the blessing for the moon, that our sages of blessed memory established with all the mitzvot therein, to do tikkun to its root in the highest place, to satisfy our Maker, and to do the will of our Creator. Let our divine protector’s pleasure be upon us, and the labor of our hands, make it secure, the labor of our hands ensure!

3. Look at the moon and recite the blessing for the moon

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בְּמֵאֲמָרוֹ בְּרָא שְׁחָקִים,
וּבְרוּחַ פִּיּוֹ כָּל צָבָאָם, חֶק וּזְמַן נָתַן לָהֶם שְׁלֵא יִשְׁנוּ אֶת תְּפִקִּידָם.
שְׁשִׁים וּשְׁמַחִים לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹן קוֹנֵם, פּוֹעֵל אֶמֶת שְׁפָעֵלְתוֹ אֶמֶת. וְלִלְבָנָה
אָמַר שְׁתַּחֲדֵשׁ עֲטֻרַת תְּפָאֲרַת לַעֲמוּסֵי בְטוֹן, שֶׁהֵם עֲתִידִים לְהִתְחַדֵּשׁ
כְּמוֹתֶיהָ, וּלְפָאֵר לְיוֹצְרָם עַל שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלִכּוּתוֹ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, מְחַדֵּשׁ
הַדָּשִׁים.

4. At this point the celebrant may tell his or her coming out story

5. Each of the traditional 7 greeting verses (for text consult one of the siddurim cited above) may now be recited three times in Hebrew and/or English, either by the group together, or alternating between celebrant, group, and all. Smaller stories of challenge may be told between these verses as pre-arranged. Dancing or jumping toward the moon is traditional during the recitation of the second verse.

6. The following may be recited to celebrate a friend, friends, or a partner present, or anticipate the possibility of loving family, friendship, or partnership (Kol Dodi Hineh...etc.)

The voice of my beloved- look s/he’s coming, dancing on the mountains, leaping on the hills. My love is like a hart, yes like a stag of the gazelles. Look at my love standing there behind our wall, inspecting through the window, gazing through the latticework.

7. Psalm 121 may be read or sung in English and/or Hebrew

8. Psalm 150 may be said or sung in English and/or Hebrew

9. The celebrant and other participants may choose this time to commit themselves to continue to come out in the year ahead or to engage in social action on behalf of LGBTQ people. Hopes or commitments may be shared aloud.

10. The traditional rabbinic text of Kiddush Levanah may be recited.

“The Academy of Rabbi Yishmael taught: Had Israel not been privileged to face their Creator in Heaven except for once a month, it would have sufficed for them. Abaye said: Therefore one must recite it while standing.

Who is this who rises from the desert clinging to that one’s beloved?

May it be your will, Eternal One, our God, and God of my ancestors, to fill the flaw of the moon that there be no diminution in it. May the light of the moon be like the light of the sun and like the light of the seven days of creation, as it was before it was diminished, as it is said: “The two great luminaries.” And may there be fulfilled upon us the verse that is written: They shall seek Adonai, their God, and David, their king. Amen.”

11. Psalm 67 may be recited in English and/or Hebrew

12. The ceremony may conclude with Aleynu and Mourner’s Kaddish (possibly Kaddish for LGBTQ/Jewish martyrs), niggunim, or LGBTQ “folk songs”

Bar or Bat Mitzvah

Dr. Neil Theise has compared the ritual of coming out to one’s family to the bar or bat mitzvah. Each ritual comes with great preparation and anxiety and each results in a greater sense of responsibility and commitment.

For transgender people who do not self-identify with the presumed sex of their genitalia and instead identify as MTF (male-to-female), FTM (female-to-male), transwomen, or transmen, often a major component of their coming out is naming or renaming themselves. The biblical Abraham, Sarah, and Jacob all undergo profound name change experiences that highlight a spiritual shift for them. For centuries, Jews have felt empowered to change their names at significant junctures in their lives. Likewise, transgender people today often change their names in the course of

embracing their identity. For example, someone who was born presumably male who is transitioning to female identity may choose to embrace a more stereotypically female name. Other “gender queer” people may choose a more stereotypically gender-neutral name. Therefore, Jewish tradition offers transgender people opportunities to mark their own transitions through a Jewish naming or re-naming ceremony.

For some transgender Jews, bar or bat mitzvah may have been a childhood ritual that particularly lost its luster; the very name is sex-specific. In 1999, several trans-identified students at the third annual LBGT Jewish student leadership Shabbaton sponsored by NUJLS which took place at Smith College, expressed their hopes to celebrate an adult bar or bat mitzvah as an endpoint of their transitioning processes.

The staff manual for Taglit-birthright israel: Hillel trip is a great starting point for adult naming and b’nai mitzvah ceremonies.

Ceremonies of Commitment

While the most basic training in creating LBGT-friendly communities reveals that each one of our actions sends a message, perhaps when it comes to ritual this message is strongest when we deal with wedding ceremonies. A heterosexual wedding ceremony, and therefore a heterosexual wedding simulation for educational value on a college campus, may make some queer-identified students and allies feel uneasy at best. It also might reinforce a dichotomy of normal vs. abnormal that will make many queer Jews uncomfortable at the table. Let us not be so naïve as to think that programming a heterosexual mock Jewish wedding is not sending a message. Might our Jewish campus communities feel as if simulating a same-sex wedding is “too political,” we might do well to remind ourselves that same-sex couples cannot have public ceremonies of commitment that feel entirely apolitical because any open display of emotion by a same-sex couple is seen as “political” by a substantial part of our society. Fewer people discuss the injustice of heterosexual couples receiving civil licensing while this privilege is not available to same-sex couples. One way that many rabbis are dealing with this with heterosexual couples now is by publicly acknowledging the injustice being done. Some do this by removing a drop of wine from the full cup for the sheva brachot, the seven wedding blessings. Others add a blessing praying for a more just world. Still others use the metaphor of a destroyed Jerusalem (before breaking a glass at the end of the ceremony) to discuss what is broken about our world, this injustice in particular.

We would also do well as Hillel professionals to be sensitive to our queer students who return from attending the heterosexual wedding of a relative—particularly a sibling—feeling upset but who are unable to describe exactly why.

CONTEMPORARY QUEER JEWISH RITUALS

Coming Out Rituals

Our students may wish to celebrate this milestone in a variety of ways. From a quiet blessing each time they tell someone new of their identities to an aliyah to the Torah on Shabbat morning with a mi sheberach blessing to an elaborate Kiddush levanah ceremony (see above). Rebecca Alpert suggests the following blessing:

Let us bless the source of life for giving me the courage to come out.

בְּרַךְ אֶת עֵין הַחַיִּים אֲשֶׁר נִתְּנָה לִי הַעֲצָמָה לְצֵאת מִן הַמְצָרִים.

It is important for us as Hillel professionals to remember that some LBGT people regard coming out as a specific moment in time and others regard it as an ongoing process. In either case, just as Sheila Peltz Weinberg reflects on the the daily morning liturgy that “Every day, Creation is renewed,” coming out is not a one time event; LBGT people are coming out to new people they meet throughout their lives. Some of rituals reflect one-time “milestone” coming out experiences while others may reflect the ongoing process of coming out.

Transitioning Rituals

Sarah Rubin compiled some notes and suggestions for how a congregation might affirm a transgender person’s transition process through Jewish ritual. Here are some of her thoughts:

Before the beginning of transition:

- A thank you for the body as it has served, a recognition of the body in some way
- Recitation of Genesis 1:26-27
- A prayer that God be present in the hands and minds of the surgeons

Interregnum (during transition):

- Song from the bedtime Shema: Uriel lighting the way, Rephael providing healing, Michael carrying the image of God in which we are created, and Gavriel carrying the strength of God; all the while, Shekhina, the presence of God, the compassion, remains always, traveling the path, following along above.

After the surgical transition:

- Birkat HaGomel
- Shehecheyanu
- Naming (perhaps a brief naming ceremony along with an Aliyah, if the person want to have a communal ritual?)

Cantor David Berger offers the following text of a transition blessing based on a traditional naming blessing. This blessing was written for the occasion of a transgender student wishing to ritually declare a new name:

May the One who blessed our ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah bless our brother/sister, who is undergoing his/her transition to unite body and soul. May he/she be known in the people Israel as (insert name here).

May it be God's will that he/she succeed in his/her way and see blessing in all the works of his/her hands, and let us say, Amen.

For a male:

מי שְׁבַרְךָ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֲבָרְהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב וְאִמְתֵּינוּ שָׂרָה רַבֵּקָה רַחֵל וְלֵאָה, הוּא יְבָרְךָ אֶת אַחֵינוּ הָעוֹבֵר אֶת מַעְבְּרוֹ לְיַחַד גּוֹפוֹ וְנַפְשׁוֹ וְיִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל (פְּלוֹנִי בֶן פְּלוֹנִי). יְהִי רָצוֹן שֶׁיִּצְלַח בְּדַרְכּוֹ וְיִרְאֶה בְּרַכָּה בְּכָל-מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו, וְנֹאמֵר אָמֵן.

For a female

מי שְׁבַרְךָ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֲבָרְהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב וְאִמְתֵּינוּ שָׂרָה רַבֵּקָה רַחֵל וְלֵאָה, הוּא יְבָרְךָ אֶת אַחֹתֵינוּ הָעוֹבֶרֶת אֶת מַעְבְּרָהּ לְיַחַד גּוּפָהּ וְנַפְשָׁהּ וְיִקְרָא שְׁמָהּ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל (פְּלוֹנִי בַת פְּלוֹנִי). יְהִי רָצוֹן שֶׁתִּצְלַח בְּדַרְכָּהּ וְתִרְאֶה בְּרַכָּה בְּכָל-מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָהּ, וְנֹאמֵר אָמֵן

Rituals around Social Justice and Injustice

Given that homophobia is the one form of hatred that is both broadly acceptable by our society and wrapped up in assumptions of invisibility of “the other,” LGBT people and our allies are all-too-often in positions of hearing homophobic remarks ranging from playful to threatening. In each circumstance the queer advocate must make a choice, often at a split second’s notice about whether and how to speak up, or whether to remain silent. While speaking up may be empowering, it also runs the risk (particularly when we are alone and those who hate us are in groups) of making ourselves even more vulnerable. Remaining silent runs contrary to our values. Rabbi Avi Katz-Orlow points out that Psalm 114 has taught us:

לֹא הִמְתִּים יְהִלְלוּ יְ-ה, וְלֹא כָל יִרְדֵי דוּמָה.

the dead will not praise God, nor will those who have fallen into silence, a Jewish value that he understands as parallel to ACT-UP’s (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) mottos that Action=Life; Silence=Death. After one of these encounters, the queer person or queer ally is often second guessing: did I do the right thing? Should I have said more? I am going to be physically assaulted because I have said too much? The words of the Psalmist may be comforting and empowering, but what about when we choose to remain silent in an effort to protect ourselves?

In 2001, Rabbi Maurice Harris created this ritual for witnessing an injustice:

Purposes of the Ritual: The ritual is intended to help the practitioner do the following::

1. **Acknowledge** to God and to that practitioner that she witnessed an injustice.
2. **Name** the feelings that the injustice has aroused.
3. **Acknowledge** to God and himself that he feels that he did not respond as righteously as he could have in the situation (if applicable).
4. **Ask** God for compassion and understanding towards her feelings.
5. **Ask** God for insight into how he can take new action to heal the area of injustice that he witnessed/failed to respond to in a more righteous fashion.

6. **Remember** and **name aloud** that Jewish tradition is impassioned for justice.

7. **Remember** and **name aloud** that the Jewish tradition of understanding that the perpetrators of injustice, the victims, and the witnesses are all human beings fashioned in God's image.

8. **Remember** and **name aloud** that the Jewish tradition understands God to be compassionate and understanding towards us when we fall short, especially in moments of unexpected challenge and vulnerability

9. **Remember** and **name aloud** that the Jewish tradition impels us to do the work of tikkun olam, but does not expect us to complete the work single-handedly

10. **Create a vessel** for committing to do an act or acts of tikkun olam to serve the double function of working to counter the witnessed injustice and working to release the practitioner from any distressed emotional state.

After witnessing an injustice: *This ritual can be performed alone or with others*

- Light a candle and place it before you.
- Sing or say the following: My God, the soul you have given me is pure:

אֱלֹהֵי, נְשָׁמָה שְׁנָתַתָּ בִּי טְהוֹרָה הִיא.

- Whether you are alone or with others, re-tell in your own words what you witnessed, including how it made you feel, how it continues to make you feel, and –if applicable—how you feel you disappointed yourself in your response

- Read or have an accompanying person read the following Biblical verse aloud: And God created the human in God's image. In the image of God the Divine One created the human. Male and female, God created them. (Genesis 1:27)

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצַלְם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר
וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם

- In your own words ask God, using whatever names of the Divine feel most comfortable to you, to pay attention to your suffering from your recent experience. Describe what the suffering feels like presently, and ask for the Holy One to help raise your awareness to discover what it will take to dissipate or transcend this suffering. If you feel you disappointed yourself during the event, ask God to help you find a course of action that will allow you to feel overflowing compassion and love for yourself, and that will also allow you to take some kind of action to rededicate yourself to the aspect of justice that you saw get violated. When you have finished read the following:

- Recite: Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream

(Amos 5:24)

וַיִּגַל כַּמִּים מְשֻׁפָּט וַצְדִקָּה כְּנַחַל אֵיתָן :

- Establish a time within 24 hours by which you intend to write down an act of tikkun olam in the area of injustice that you witnessed. This should be an act that you will carry out in the very near future. In your own words, state aloud when and where you intend to write this down. Ask God to help you balance the importance of being kind to yourself with finding a meaningful act that will help re-direct the negative energy you encountered when you witnessed the injustice. State aloud that you intend to trust that when the time that you have named arrives, whatever act of tikkun olam you written down will serve to transform the present moment of distress into a new calm. Of others are present, ask them to serve as witnesses to your declaration by saying “amen”

- Say aloud (along with anyone else who is present): You are not obligated to finish the work, nor are you free to abandon it. (Pirke Avot 2:21)

לֹא עָלֶיךָ הַמְּלָאכָה לְגִמּוֹר, וְלֹא אַתָּה בֶן חוֹרִין לְהַבְטִיל
מִמֶּנָּה

Justice, justice shall you pursue...

צְדָק צְדָק תִּרְדֹּף

- Close by singing or saying the following (along with anyone else who is present):

Barchu, Dear One; Shekhinah, Holy Name:

When I call on the sound of my soul, I come home.

- So long as no hazard is presented, allow the candle to burn itself out or to burn until the moment you write down your planned act of tikkun olam

Sex, Intimacy, and Dating

Since college is a time of new experiences including experiences of strong emotional relationships and new sexual experiences, it is important for Hillel professionals to challenge ourselves to be as approachable by our students around issues of sex and intimacy as we feel we can be. While it is our responsibility to maintain professional boundaries, we also might remind ourselves that if something a student chooses to discuss with us makes us feel uncomfortable, how much more uncomfortable would that student be if that student did not feel that Hillel professionals were approachable to listen to the student's concerns.

Sex, intimacy, and dating are highly ritualized with or without our input as Hillel professionals. Like coming out, we can simply let them happen to our students, or we can recognize dating and intimacy. Will our students just connect emotionally and/or physically or will we help them to make sex, intimacy, and dating meaningful Jewish experiences? For some students this will include learning about Jewish values surrounding intimacy, power, and pleasure. Others may feel great senses of connection from sex or intimacy and/or great senses of loss when these are lacking and turn toward traditional blessing formulae to sanctify their experience.

Hillel facilities that contain information about healthy relationships and sexuality, HIV, and STD's, show students that this is a safe space to speak about sex; we cannot expect our students to make wise choices about sex unless they are empowered to speak about it.

Jewish texts around saving life as our highest value may seek to inspire our students toward safer sexual behavior as would conversations around what it means to approach sex in a healthy way, to consider what our students' comfort zones and boundaries are around sexual behavior.

For men who have sex with men in particular, sexual expression is associated greatly with potential for illness and death. The safer

sex movements initiated by GMHC (Gay Men's Health Crisis) after the onslaught of the AIDS pandemic have been all but supplanted with the notion that "AIDS is not a gay disease." When Lori Jean of the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center reminded us that "HIV is a gay disease" earlier this year and received much criticism, her detractors failed to recognize the increasing infection rates among gay men, particularly gay men of color, and particularly in urban areas where the rates of infection among men who have sex with men are as high as 50%. Needless to say, students need mentors who can empathize with the association between sex and disease yet model a striving for physical and sexual health and well-being to college students who—as late adolescents—may find themselves feeling invincible.

HIV-testing

Like the rituals surrounding safer sex, HIV-testing is something that has become part of the reality for sexually active people and for men who have sex with men in particular. Until recently, most HIV-testing was done by drawing a vial of the client's blood and returning the results of laboratory assays a week or two later. Today there are cheek swap versions of the test as well and rapid finger-stick blood tests that return results in twenty minutes. Since ancient days, Judaism has included blood rituals from circumcision to traditions around menstruation. Inspired by the Israelites' placing the blood of the paschal lamb on their doorposts, in 1996 the artist Albert Winn created a mezuzah with a vial of his HIV-positive blood which was affixed to the doorpost of the Judah L. Magnes Museum in Berkeley, CA on World AIDS Day. One gay rabbi speaks of one year on the eve of Passover in which he woke up, attended the ritual circumcision of his teacher's baby boy, headed to his family's house for the Seder, and had his blood drawn for his annual ritual of HIV-testing along the way. He found himself meditating over and over again the passage from Ezekiel that it is customary to recite at a circumcision ceremony: "By your blood you shall live" (16:6).

If a student cannot have a friend accompany the student for this sort of occasion, having a friend "on-call" means there is an instant follow up mechanism and support network for someone whose result is not "negative." The period between having one's blood drawn (or cheek swabbed) and receiving results, be it twenty minutes or two weeks, is a time we may be naturally drawn to prayer. Given that we know from science that the test will likely determine the definitive presence or absence of an HIV-infection in our body, praying "that we are negative" may not be as useful a prayer as praying for strength regardless of the result. For those with connections to the Psalter, Psalms 90 and 121, Psalms of protection and journey may

be comforting during this waiting period. Much as we feast at the end of Yom Kippur (a controlled journey toward death, a near death experience of sorts), having a celebratory meal after receiving test results with which we are happy seems an appropriate reaffirmation of life. We might also express our gratitude with an offering of tzedakah.

Advances in monitoring and treatment of HIV mean that many people with HIV in privileged parts of the world such as the United States are living long happy lives. As with any trauma, we will not know how we would react to being told we are HIV-positive unless it actually happens. Having a support system in place before having a test is crucial.

Same Sex Weddings/Commitment Ceremonies

Modeling a same-sex wedding/commitment ceremony on campus has the potential to be educational, political, and engaging. The plethora of rabbis who perform same-sex ceremonies are resources for the variety of approaches that exist to for these ceremonies. (See Above)

LGBTQ Pride Month & National Coming Out Day

While June is the month associated with the Stonewall rebellion, June is also a month when many campuses are not in full swing. LGBTQ pride months or weeks may be around National Coming Out Day (October 11) or at another time of year. Acknowledging this at Hillel events is a way to ritualize it and welcome people. Including readings such as the *al hanisim* prayer that Rabbi Ayelet Cohen composed (see Below) is appropriate for these occasions.

Selected Jewish Texts Useful for Creating Queer Jewish Ritual

Tefilat HaDerech (the traveler's prayer)

Psalm 121

The Hebrew Bible: Esther

The Hebrew Bible: Ruth

The Hebrew Bible: I Samuel (the story of David and Jonathan)

The Hebrew Bible: Genesis (the story of Joseph)

The Passover Haggadah

Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones by Deborah Ornstein

Like Bread on the Seder Plate by Rebecca Alpert

Twice Blessed by Christie Balka and Andy Rose

Rabbi's Manual of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

עַל הַנְּסִים וְעַל הַפְּרָקוֹ, וְעַל הַגְּבוּרוֹת וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת, וְעַל הַמַּלְחָמוֹת
שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וּלְאֵמוֹתֵינוּ בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם בְּזֶמֶן הַזֶּה

בימי התנועה לזכויות האזרח באמריקה, קמה קהלת הגאים להלחם על
הכבוד והצדק המגיעים לכל בני ובנות אנוש, כשמתחילי שמך/שמך,
בטענתם שהם שונאים בשם יהוה, עמדו נגד בניה/בניה וּבנותיך/ובנותיך
להשפילם ולאסרם, להשמידם ולמחוקם, וּבְרַחֲמֶיךָ וּבְרַחֲמֵי הַרְבִּים
עֲמַדְתָּ/תְּ לָהֶם בְּעֵת צָרָתָם, רַבָּת/תְּ אֶת רִיבָם, דָּנַת/תְּ אֶת דִּינָם, חֲזַקְתָּ/תְּ
אֶת לִבָם לְעַמֵּד בְּיַחַד, לְפָקַח אֶת עֵינֵיהֶם וְאֶת עֵינֵי הָעוֹלָם, לְהַבִּין שֶׁהַחֲרוּת
וְהַזְכוּת לְאֵהָב שִׁיכוֹת לְכָל יְצִירוֹתֶיךָ/יְצִירוֹתֶיךָ. חֲזַקְתָּ/תְּ אוֹתָם וְאוֹתָנוּ כְּדֵי
שֶׁנִּזְכְּרוּ לְרֵאוֹת נְפִלְאוֹת וְלַעֲשׂוֹת נְסִים, לְהִיּוֹת אֲשֶׁר נִהְיָה וְלְאֵהָב אֶת מִי
שֶׁנִּשְׁאַהֵב, לֹא בְּצֵל מְגוּרֵינוּ אֲלָא בְּאוֹר הַחַיִּים, לְהִיּוֹת כִּיהוּדִים בְּחִיק הַקְּהֵלָה,
לְקַדֵּשׁ אֶת אַחֲוֵינוּ וְלִשֵׁשׁ עֲלֵינוּ וְעֲלֵיךָ/וְעֲלֵיךָ. אָבֵן מָאִסוֹ הַבּוֹנִים הַיְתֵה
לְרֵאשׁ פְּנֵה. וְלֹא נְבוֹשׁ וְלֹא נִכְלָם לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

We thank You for the miraculous deliverance, for the heroism and for the triumphs in battle of our ancestors in other days, and in our time. In the wake of the civil rights movement lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people began to organize for the dignity and justice that all of us are due as human beings on this earth. Those who profane your name, claiming that they hate us in the name of God, rose up to criminalize us, pathologize us, brutalize us, and erase us. And You in your great mercy stood with us in the time of our troubles. You fought alongside us, vindicated us, gave us the courage to stand together, to open our eyes and the eyes of the world around us, to see that the freedom and the right to love belongs to all of your creations. You have given us the strength to witness and create wonders, to be who we are and to love whom we love not only in the safety of our homes but outside in the light of the world, to live as Jews in the embrace of community, to sanctify our unions and celebrate ourselves before each other and before You. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. May we never know shame again.

Al hanisim prayers of gratitude were created for Purim and Chanukah, neither of which is mentioned in the Five Books of the Torah. Another *al hanisim* was written in the twentieth century to celebrate Israel's independence. This prayer was written in that tradition to express gratitude for the triumph of the human spirit with divine help to overcome oppression. —Ayelet S. Cohen

time to investigate the etymology of the term. For Jewish thinkers, the sin of Sodom is economic rather than sexual. The passage in question is found in Genesis 19. Two angels, disguised as men, visit Abram's nephew Lot, who has taken up residence in Sodom. When Lot shows the stranger hospitality, the *anshei-S'dom* ("people of Sodom") surround the house.

"both young and old, all the people from every quarter. And they called to Lot, and said to him: 'Where are the men that came to you this night? Bring them out to us, that we may know them.' And Lot went out to them to the door, and shut the door after him. And he said: 'I pray, my brothers, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters that have not known man; let me please bring them out to you, and do to them as is good in your eyes; but to these men do nothing forasmuch as they are come under the shadow of my roof.' And they said: 'Stand back.' And they said: 'This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will now play the judge! Now will we deal worse with you than with them!' And they pressed exceedingly upon the man, upon Lot, and drew near to break the door. But the men [that is, the angels] put forth their hand, and brought Lot into the house to them, and shut the door. And they killed the people that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great; so that they themselves could not find the door." (Genesis 19:4-11)

We notice a number of striking features of this text. First, it is common Biblical shorthand that the phrase "to know" indicates sexual relations. The Biblical commentators Rashi and ibn Ezra concur. Looking deeper into the text, we see that it is possible to question the conventional wisdom about nature of the misdeeds of the townspeople. First, we see that no specific sex acts are mentioned. "To know" is as much detail as we get. Assuming that all of the townspeople are male, we might assume that anal sex is the act that will take place, but there is no specific textual basis to make that claim. Further complicating the issue is that the term *anshei-S'dom* is not entirely clear. While *anashim* means "men" and *nashim*, "women," in Hebrew a mixed group including as few as one man is designated by the term "*anashim*." Thus, we use the term "people of Sodom." Note further that the text describes the group as including people "both young and old, all the people from every quarter." Again, the mob could very easily be one of mixed gender.

What, then, is the sin of Sodom? Sexual assault? Though possible, we cannot even be sure of that. Sodom is discussed in some detail in other Jewish texts. The prophet Ezekiel, for example, looks back at the sins of Sodom, and draws the following conclusion: "Behold, this was the sin of your sister Sodom: pride, excess of bread, and careless serenity was with

her and her daughters; and yet she did not strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." (Ezekiel 16:48-49) Note, first, that all of the words used are specifically feminine, an oddity if one were angered by the same-sex male sex acts of the town. More strikingly, we see that Ezekiel clearly states that the sin of Sodom was economic injustice and a lack of hospitality.

This theme is picked up in later rabbinic literature. In tractate Sanhedrin, for example, the rabbis explain in great detail the extent to which Sodom was economically deprived. The people of Sodom deeply resented the poor who would deign to require economic assistance. Quoting Job, the Talmud tells us that they "would allow the naked to spend the night unclothed, no garment to shield against the cold." (Sanhedrin 109a) The rabbis are not discussing sex acts. It is particularly ironic that lack of hospitality to the poor is a criticism that can be leveled at many of the same individuals who, today, would deny LGBTQ people basic civil rights.

LEVITICUS

What can be learned from the painful texts of Leviticus 18? Of all the texts used to deny gays and lesbians basic rights, Leviticus is the one most often called upon. *V'et zachar lo tishkav mish'k'vei islah* is most commonly translated as "do not lie with a male as you would lie with women." Is there any possible way that this seemingly unambiguous text could be read in a manner that affirms LGBTQ individuals and their relationships, sexual and otherwise?

Note first that there is no mention of lesbian sex in this verse. No text in the Bible prohibits sexual relations between women, even by inference. Moreover, explicitly LGBTQ-positive readings are possible by examining the syntax of the verse. Since Leviticus 18 is clearly addressed to men, why not just say, "Do not lie with a male," period? Why add, "as you would lie with a woman?"

The rabbis tell us that there are no extraneous phrases, no extra words in Torah. Various commentators (see, for instance, Rabbi Gershon Caudill, Rabbi Steve Greenberg and Jacob Milgrom) have explored the possibilities inherent in the ambiguous phrasing. Rabbi Arthur Waskow suggests reading the text as "Do not lie with a man as if it were the same thing as lying with a woman." That is, when two gay males have a sexual encounter, they should continuously be aware that it is different from a male-female coupling. According to this reading, it might be interpreted to mean: "Set up a parallel set of institutions for dealing with this kind of sexual relationship, different from those that apply to sexual relationships between a man and a woman."

Perhaps the meaning is this: if, in your heart, you really want to be with a woman, then don't be with a man. And vice versa. There is, perhaps, a broader principle at work here. Any time we relate to a person not as they are, but rather as we selfishly wish them to be, we suffocate the soul of the flesh-and-blood human being before us. If any one of us has a relationship with one person as a substitute for another – we are using that person. The Talmud is more succinct: “One should not drink from one goblet when their eyes are feasting on another goblet.” (Nedarim 20b)

The prohibition applies even to ourselves: do not relate to the world as one thing, when in your heart you are another. Perhaps, even this: “Don't pretend to be straight when you are not. Come out of the closet!”

In this context, Leviticus 18 can be a text with universal applicability. How many of us – perhaps as Jews, as gays and lesbians, as transgender people, as converts, as progressives, as a member of any group that is outnumbered and endangered – can relate to this fear of honest, open dealings with the world around us? Thus the Torah instructs: Do not be afraid of the truth, because it is through truth that our painful exile from G-d will end, and we can bask in the light of healing and reconciliation – with each other, with ourselves, with the Infinite Power of the universe.

MISH'K'VEI IN GENESIS

As we help students struggle with the text in Leviticus, it is important to note that the text does not exist in a vacuum. Our LGBTQ-positive reading is strengthened by an examination of the word *mish'k'vei*. We see the word first in the book of Genesis.

In that first book of the Torah, Jacob condemns his first-born son Reuven with the charge of improper sexual relations with Bilhah, the maidservant of his wife Rachel. While Jacob would be permitted to have sex with Bilhah, the maidservant of his wife, such relations are forbidden to his son Reuven. Jacob's charge is as follows: *Alita mish'k'vei avicha*. Artscroll translates the verse metaphorically, albeit vividly, “you mounted your father's couch.”

The medieval commentators are puzzled by the text. This is the first time we see this word *mish'k'vei*. The literal translation, “beds of,” is a plural word. Why? While some of our commentators hint at the verbal oddity, none address it directly. They imply, of course, that it is not literal. It is not the physical laying on the bed or couch, but rather the sex that happened there that is the problem. Further problem: why *mish'k'vei avicha*? We of

course do not presume that Jacob and Reuven had intercourse. But then – why not just mention Bilhah?

Rashi cites tractate Shabbat to say that Jacob condemns Reuven for desecrating the Shechinah, the personal intimate form of G-d, Who used to rise upon the same bed. The Ramban questions that conclusion. After all, we don't see anything here about the Shechinah. Quite the contrary: the verse plainly says it is Jacob's couch that has been defiled. Maybe this is not about Shechinah. Or even about Bilhah. Rather, the Ramban paraphrases Jacob this way: *Chalalta oti!* “You defiled me!”

The implication is clear: You insulted me. You humiliated me. It appears to refer to Jacob and Reuven's relationship – not their physical relationship, but their broken bond, a now-corroded emotional relationship. Recall the incident: in *paarshat Vayishlach*, Jacob has just lost his Rachel, his beloved. Having set the monument upon her grave, he travels sullenly down the road to Bethlehem. Finally coming to a place of rest and comfort, Jacob only undergoes more suffering. At the same moment that the Torah tells us that Jacob found a settled place, it also tells us, *vayeilech R'uvein vayishkav et-Bilhah*. “Reuven went and lay with Bilhah” – an unspeakable violation, bottomless in its cruelty.

Worse: *Vayishma Yisrael*. “Israel heard.” Nobody told Jacob directly. He had to hear about it from others. According to Chizkuni, he heard *sh'R'uvein bilbeil matato*, “that Reuven ravaged his bed.” We don't know from whom. *Vayishma Yisrael*. Perhaps all of Israel heard. We can only imagine pain, humiliation, and betrayal.

The text tells us immediately that Jacob still had twelve sons, perhaps, to inform us that Jacob did not exact physical retribution from his son. And what of his son? How do we begin to understand Reuven? Perhaps Reuven has felt his own pain and humiliation. It has been suggested that Jacob, following the death of Rachel, established his primary sleeping space with Bilhah. Reuven, the oldest of the children, knows best the trials the family has already endured. He knows how his mother has been humiliated. And so now, in the absence of Rachel, his father Jacob chooses not wife and mother Leah – Reuven's mother – but a *pilegish*? A concubine? Imagine.

What, then, was the sex act about? Who was it about? Certainly not Bilhah, who is object, not subject, in this tale. Was it to despoil Bilhah so that Jacob could no longer have relations with her, would have to sleep with Leah? Was it to exact revenge against his father? Was it to establish control, dominance, power? To cast guilt, doubt, shame over all the sexual

relations of his father? Over all the mish'k'vei avicha? All the beds of his father?

These are all possible reasons to have sex. And they're all troubling reasons to have sex. If we think now of the passage in Vayikra, the text takes on a powerful meaning. The word mish'k'vei is used only three times in all of scripture: the two times in Vayikra, and our text in here in Genesis. In the Genesis text, Reuven has literally risen upon his father's bed, but the problem is not the bed itself. Tragedy arises because Reuven has sex with a woman who is in relationship with another, with his father. The act is not a loving act. It is an act of anger and power-hunger. It is an insult to Jacob, and Reuven degrades all involved.

In Leviticus, we look first to the p'shat. Seen in the light of our analysis of Vayichi, the meaning seems to shift. V'et-zachar lo tishkav mish'k'vei ishah. "Don't lay with a man on the beds of a woman." It seems entirely plausible that, as in parashat Vayechi, the beds are a representative of another, more serious problem. Who is this woman? A wife of one of the men involved? A woman who expects integrity and honesty in her marriage, but instead is betrayed? And who are the men? Men who long for a full relationship, but are denied such by society, and who must resort to deceit and shame, torture by guilt and self-loathing? Who have sex with women not as an act of love, but as a grueling, tormented burden? Who bring that guilt and torment upon all the mish'k'vei ishah?

It is to'evah – an abomination – to bring this upon a marital bed. And it is kal v'chomer (all the moreso) a to'evah for a society to demand us to do so. Just as Reuven should not have used sex as a tool for domination, we too should treat sexuality as a gift to be shared out of intimacy and responsibility.

Chizkuni suggests that, in verse 4, Jacob is addressing not Reuven, but his children. Yes, the wording is harsh, admits Jacob, but the sin is grave. And so Jacob's message may not be a blessing to Reuven, but it is a warning to his progeny, and to us. The Torah asks us to acknowledge the profound power of sexual intimacy – to not take it lightly, but rather to honor the physical, emotional and spiritual magnitude implied in such an act. And, in doing so, to honor our partners, our Creator – and ourselves.

DAVID

David's relationship first with King Saul, and then the king's son Jonathan is of particular interest to those who study LGBTQ issues in Bible. In the last

25 years, some scholars have suggested that the relationships among these men may have been romantic or sexual in nature. For LGBTQ students and those who serve them, this reading is vital. This section will examine the text, particularly I Samuel chapters 16 through 20, to explore and develop these themes.

Ish To'arish – David is Introduced

In I Samuel 16, both the reader and Saul are introduced to the character of David. The characteristics used to establish David relate to his appearance. In the narrative describing Samuel's search for a king, verse 12 describes David as im y'fei einayim v'tov ro'i / with pretty eyes and good appearance. Six verses later, when Saul is tormented by an evil spirit, a young man in the king's court steps forward to tell that he knows of an ish to'ar / a man of fine form, who turns out to be David. In the following chapter, furthermore, David will be described during the Goliath narrative as im y'fei mar'eh / with a pretty appearance.

The terms y'fei einayim, y'fei mar'eh, and ish to'ar are significant for two reasons. First, they are terms more commonly applied in the Tanakh to women. Compare, for example, Rachel's description (Genesis 29:17) as y'fat to'ar viyfat mareh / of pretty form and pretty appearance. Similarly, Queen Esther is described (Esther 2:7) as ha'na'arah y'fat to'ar v'tovat mar'eh. When the young man in 16:18 describes David as an ish to'ar, it is the only time in the Tanakh an individual man describes another man's appearance in such a positive manner, utilizing such terms.

In the previous verse, Saul had sought relief from his evil spirit, seeking an ish meitiv l'nagein / a man who plays well, for v'nigeid b'yado v'tov lach / he will play with his hand, and I will be well. The young man who had stepped forward then describes David as a man who yodei'ah nagein / knows how to play. The lack of a direct object is notable; while Saul's servants suggest a man who can play a lyre, neither Saul nor the young servant include the name of the instrument.

Indeed, when David is brought before Saul to relieve the king's evil spirit, it is reported that the young man (verse 23) v'nigein v'yado / played with his hand. This usage appears numerous times in Samuel, with the name of the instrument absent but the phrase v'yado in its place; this occurs nowhere else in the Tanakh. The usage may suggest a masturbatory display for the king, or a direct sexual stimulation of the king by David. The seductive nature of David's initial encounter with Saul cannot be denied.

David is sent by his father to Saul, and v'yavo David el-Shaul / David came to Saul. Possible sexual connotations can be connected with this through the use of the root b-o-' with the preposition el. Compare, for example, the relationship of Abraham and Hagar in Genesis 16:4 – v'yavo el-Hagar / he copulated with Hagar – and of Jacob and Rachel in Genesis 29:30 – v'yavo gam el-Rachel / he copulated also with Rachel. The verse continues, telling us that David vaya'amod lifanav / stood before [Saul]. Again David is gazed upon and, as a result, vay'ehavnu m'od / Saul loved him greatly.

Nefesh Y'honatan Niksh'rah B'nefesh David - David & Jonathan Meet

Beginning in chapter 18, Jonathan and David establish a strong bond with one another. Jonathan's soul niksh'rah / is bound up with David's, Jonathan loving David k'nafsho / as his own soul. The root k-sh-r ("to bind, to join together") has a number of connotations. The verb can be used with physical connotations, as in the description in Nehemiah 3:38 that Jerusalem's walls vaticasher / were joined together. Yet the word can signify an emotional connection, as was the case in Genesis 44:30, when Joseph's brothers inform him of the familial love between Jacob and Benjamin: v'nafsho k'shurah v'nafsho / his soul is bound up with his soul. Meanwhile in Isaiah 49:18, marriage language is used: ut'kashrim kakalah / bind them on like a bride.

The next verse tells us that vayikacheihu / Saul took [David] on the same day, and would not let him return to his father's house. The word is derived from l-k-ch, a root meaning "take." The odd possessive language, seemingly moving David from the domain of Yishai to that of Saul, points to the use of the root in meaning to take in marriage. Compare, for example, the complaint of Leah to Rachel in Genesis 30:15 that kachtei et-ishi / you have taken my husband. In Deuteronomy 20:7 the use of the verb is again related to marriage, but adds what may be a specific sexual component, exempting from military service ha-ish asher eiras ishah v'lo lakachah / the man who has betrothed a wife but not taken her – lest another man take her. Genesis 38:2 combines the two connotations with the use of the verb b-o-' that we saw in I Samuel 6:21, when we learn that Judah saw his future wife Chira, vayikacheha vayavo eileha / and he took her and copulated with her.

Brit B'ahavato – The Relationship is Strengthened

The narrative becomes increasingly complicated in verse three, when Jonathan and David make a brit b'ahavato oto k'nafsho / covenant of his [presumably Jonathan's] love for him, that was like [his love] for his own soul.

We have already seen that the souls of David and Jonathan were intertwined; now it seems that that bond is declared official. A brit of love is unusual, and it is not out of the question that it signifies a marriage covenant. (See, for comparison, Proverbs 2:17 and Malachi 2:14.) In what may be a sealing of that covenant, the next verse tells us that Jonathan vayitpasheit / strips himself down to [or including] chagoro / his girdle. Jonathan here is apparently devoid of his clothes and his political position as he stands before David – but it is Jonathan himself who makes that decision.

In chapter 19, we are informed that Jonathan chafeitz b'David m'od / greatly desires [or was delighted by] David. Chafeitz is obviously a strong emotion, often attributed to G-d. The term connotes strong emotional – and often sexual – attraction. In Genesis 34:19, Shechem chafeitz b'vat Ya'akov / desires the daughter of Jacob, namely Dinah – certainly this is something other than friendship. Of Esther it is told (Esther 2:14), similarly, that chafeitz bah ha-melech / the king desired her.

By chapter 20, the relationship between David and Jonathan seems to take precedence over all others. Despite the fact that Saul has declared David to be his mortal enemy, and as such stands as an impediment to Jonathan's assumption of the throne, the king's son nonetheless declares his loyalty to the young warrior. An emotional exchange between the two occurs, in which Jonathan declares to David: Mah-tomar naf'sh'cha v'eh'eh'she lach / whatever your soul asks, I will do. Jonathan uses his cunning and skill to protect his mate from the king's designs, thereby ensuring that he himself will never succeed his father. The political and emotional transformation is complete.

At chapter's end, the plan of the two young partners has succeeded, and David emerges from danger unscathed. Jonathan and David have an emotional reunion (I Samuel 20:41), in which the two cry and kiss and David higdil / until David magnified [or exceeded]. This is a particularly unusual term, translated often as "David wept the longer," though clearly that is unstated at best. From the root g-d-l, "grow large," it may suggest erection or ejaculation, signifying a sexual union between the two. Meanwhile, we can say that David's political standing has certainly grown greater than that of his mate. The trajectories, once again, are parallel.

Ahavatcha Li Mei'ahavat – Postscript

Both Saul and Jonathan die in battle and, sure enough, their fall is juxtaposed with the ascension of King David. As a public figure, David must now eulogize the two warriors. In doing so, David sings a dirge that includes the following: Achi Y'honatan na'amta li m'od nifl'atah ahavatcha li mei'ahavat

nashim / My brother Jonathan, you were delightful to me, your love was wonderful to me, more than the love of women.” (II Samuel 1:26)

More than any other text, this would seem to be inconclusive proof of a romantic relationship between the two young men. In fact, many commentators have concluded just that. Boer cites work by Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, who count this eulogy among the “anchor points in the text” for a “homosexual reading” (Fewell and Gunn in Boer, 23), as well as Silvia Schroer and Thomas Staubli, who suggest that the story “provides a model of male-to-male love.” (Boer, 23) Kirsch, as well, notes that the love professed by David in his eulogy raises the “tantalizing question” of whether a gay relationship between he and Jonathan existed. (Kirsch, 129) Horner provides a conclusive answer: the eulogy is proof that “the two of them loved each other both physically and spiritually.” (Horner, 34 – emphasis in original)

Certainly there are those who reject Horner’s conclusion. Yet the contorted logic employed by many of his detractors often serves to support, rather than disprove, his assertion. Telushkin, for example, suggests that “what David likely meant” when praising Jonathan’s love was “that it was so disinterested and platonic.” (Telushkin, 211) Robert H. Pfeiffer reminds the reader that, despite any insinuations to the contrary, David’s professed grief was “intense and sincere, but nonetheless virile.” (Pfeiffer in Kirsch, 129) In the same volume, J.A. Thompson asserts that ‘-h-v, in the Samuel text, refers to “the kind of attachment people had to a king that could fight their battles for them.” (Ibid.)

As Boer reminds us, terms such as “homosexual” and “heterosexual” are constructions that date only back to the last century. (Boer, 23) But to assign to the concept of love such modifiers as “disinterested” and “virile” is at least as tenuous, if not downright laughable. No such qualification is sought, for example, in explaining Michal’s love for David. (I Samuel 18:20) Other examples of ‘-h’v, Boswell notes, appear in the Tanakh to denote:

the love of a husband for a wife (1 Sam. 1:5 [Elkanah for Hanna] . . .); and for heterosexual love leading to marriage (1 Sam. 18:28) . . . and for passion in illicit relationships (e.g., it is the word that forms “lovers” in many places: Jer. 22:20, Ezek. 16:33, Hos. 2:5[7], etc.) (Ibid.)

The theory that only the love between Jonathan and David is different should invite as much skepticism as its converse.

David’s personal and political lives are intertwined from the outset. To try and untangle one strand to the exclusion of others is foolish.

Those who view the David chronicle as either “sexual” or “political,” “gay” or “straight,” “personal” or “religious” miss at least half of the story. David is king, but he is not only that. He has a gay relationship, but marries women, at least in part for political gain. He is loved by many, subjects and close associates alike, and uses that fact to his feed his royal ambitions. He uses his power to reward his personal supporters, and punish his detractors. And so on. In this way, David is perhaps the most fully developed of all biblical characters. That he may have enjoyed the affection of both men and women only serves to lend greater depth to his portrayal.

So What?

Many will argue that this exercise is a fool’s errand. Why bother with Tanakh when its greatest proponents are insistent on excluding the LGBTQ community, and denying us basic human dignity? The Tanakh has caused too much pain in our communities, according to this view, to be extended such courtesy. Yet as a universally recognizable text, the Tanakh affects our students’ consciousness (and ours), their self-esteem, and their self-image, even if they don’t see it as binding. Love the Bible or hate it, religious attitudes shape civil discourse, public opinion and civil legislation. We know, for instance, that abolitionists in the 19th century had to address the supposed Biblical sanction of black slavery to move forward that generation’s righteous agenda. If we ignore the Tanakh, not only do we shut our students and ourselves off from the spiritual power in the text, but we also relinquish our authority to bring our own religious opinions and viewpoints into the public sphere. It is one thing for those religious conservatives who hope to will us out of existence to claim to speak for G-d. It is quite another for us to let them do so. As Hillel professionals, we owe more to our students.

The Tanakh will remain the sole possession of the purveyors of hate until we engage seriously in a discussion of our sacred texts and their significance for our lives. Students struggling with a LGBTQ identity can’t help but feel excluded and abandoned by abdication of responsibility to such intolerant interpreters and their views.

Our alternative as Hillel professionals is to share with our students a view of the Tanakh that is respectful and infused with dignity; a Tanakh that tells us we are all created in the image of G-d; a Tanakh that instructs us to be kind to the stranger, to plead for the orphan, to open our hands to the needy; a Tanakh that tells us that it is not acceptable for one group of people to enslave another, but rather redemption and freedom do come, and that is G-d’s will. Our alternative is to emulate our heroes David and

Jonathan -- to stand tall for justice, to stand tall for our heritage, to stand tall for each other. If we truly do so, we can only prevail. We are wise to recall Jonathan's words to his beloved David: "Do not be afraid – you will reign over the nation."

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Suggested Texts to Further Explore with a Critical Queer Eye:

Compiled by D'ror Chankin-Gould

Genesis, Chapters 24-28

The narrative about Isaac (femme) and Rebecca (butch) and the masculine vocabulary used to refer to Rebecca (Na'ar in the K'tiv)

Bava Metziah 84A

The narrative of the love relationship between Reish Lakish and Rav Yochanan and how their sublimated desires weren't enough and ultimately killed them,

"Joseph and Asenath" : Pseudopygrapha

Notice how asexual the references are and how easily the narrative lends itself to a Queer read on Joseph. Compare with Tanakh (Genesis 41)

Book of Ruth

The story of strong emotional perhaps sexual bonds between two women, Ruth and Naomi who loved each other above all others.

REFERENCES

QUEER JEWISH PROGRAMS

PROGRAMMING IDEAS

A short reminder before beginning to share programs: please keep in mind that relationship building and authentic engagement is equally if not more important than the provision of programs. That being said, dynamic programs can be a wonderful tool for educating the campus community, broadening Hillel's outreach, and helping to create a warm, fun, welcoming environment.

Program suggestions were compiled from volunteer input sent directly to the writer and located on the National Hillel website. Remember also that one of the best ways to run a successful Queer Jewish program is to invite a speaker, screen a movie, or delve into culture (theatre, music, etc.) from a Queer Jewish perspective, those resources are found in the next section. Also consider National Coming Out Day (October 11th) and Pride Month (June) as occasions for Queer Jewish celebration. Also email info@nujilsonlione.com for access to a database of even more program suggestions.

HOLIDAYS

Pink Hamantaschen

St. Louis Hillel and the WashU campus LGBTQ Jewish group handed out Pink Hamantaschen for Purim. Each cookie came with a quarter sheet flyer that explained the holiday and how Esther "came out" with her Judaism. This "coming out" had many similarities to what LGBTQ individuals go through, and it served as a great conversation starter. Over the course of the day there were dozens of conversations about the meaning of the holiday and the queer issues that surround it.

Queen Esther's Drag Ball

Columbia/Barnard Hillel's LGBTQ Jewish student group, Gayava, hosted a drag ball for Purim as part of the Hillel-wide festivities. Students from Jewish and Queer communities were asked to dress in drag as a jokester MC asked each student to introduce themselves and crowned a "Queen" and "King" of the ball (based on applause). This is a wonderful opportunity

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SECTION 3

Queer Jewish Programs

Josh Furman

Movies, Culture, Speakers, & Literature

Andy Ratto

FILM
PERFORMANCE
SPEAKERS
LITERATURE

Organizations & Institutions

Noah Branman

Contacts (Staff & Student Groups Directory)

Hillel Policies & Benefits

to explore coming out, camp, and Jewish laws regarding cross-dressing. A Tzedek opportunity regarding Trans people's safety and rights would be a most welcome addition.

Freedom Shabbat

UC San Diego partnered with the Women's Center, the Cross Cultural Center and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBTQ) Center to put on a special event celebrating Freedom. The idea was to come together as a campus community, emphasizing aspects of freedom that we strive for on campus. Each organization emphasized pluralism, tolerance and respect, and this was a perfect event to display this commonality. To start the night, there were numerous freedom stories of different cultures displayed around the room for people to read. Each organization was responsible for one theme of the evening. The themes included: hope, peace, unity and freedom. The organization was responsible for leading an activity the emphasized the theme. Hillel had hope. A student led a session on the symbolism behind the Western Wall. Afterwards participants were asked to write notes to be sent to Israel that they would like placed in the wall. The LGBTQ students lead an activity on unity. People were asked to design personal puzzle pieces. Afterwards these pieces were assembled into one giant poster. The woman's group taught a song about women's rights. The Cross Cultural Center told modern freedom stories of different cultures.

Coming out to the Sukkah

St. Louis Hillel put together an event when a Sukkah on campus was decorated in a queer friendly way, and a meal was hosted for LGBTQ Jewish students. Queer themes were also related to the story of Sukkot.

Queers and Allies Seder

Oberlin College organized a Seder for queer Jews and allies. The event attracted Jews who were looking for an alternative experience to the traditional Seder, and it also allowed queer Jews to come together and create a meaningful Jewish experience. Other campuses have done similar events and have used the symbolism of slavery in Egypt to discuss the queer experience that many people go through.

GENERAL PROGRAMS

A Response to General Pace

The University of Chicago event brought former Petty Officer Jason Knight

to speak on campus. He is Jewish and a former Hebrew linguist for the Navy who recently made news when he was twice discharged under Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Knight spoke on the same day that General Pace gave the keynote address to the UC Graduate School of Business.

Movie Screenings

Yale and Columbia have both organized successful screenings of many Queer Jewish movies. For "Trembling before G-d" Yale brought the film's director Sandi DuBowski to speak, and the screening of Hineini featured a discussion with executive producer Imit Klein. The key here is to appeal broadly and create a dynamic discussion. Remember to co-sponsor your film screening with Media Studies departments, on-campus Queer groups, and other relevant organizations (Trembling Before G-d could attract Orthodox students, Yossi and Jagger could bring in the ROTC, etc.). Student speakers, filmmakers, or other relevant community leaders can follow up an interesting movie with lived experiences and engaging discussion.

Clearly Marked and Monday Night in Westerbork

Clearly Marked is a hilarious, high-impact, thought-provoking theater piece that peels back the layers of the labels we all wear and digs in to what's underneath. As Bergman's signature warm and accessible storytelling begins to unfold on the stage, lines between categories start to blur and old labels start to have new lives. Also unique is the loving examination of Jewish tradition and community which Bergman - an observant Jew - brings to the stage. In the revelation of a lifetime's worth of Bergman's accumulated identities, Clearly Marked opens up a place for anyone to be more complicated than the label he wears on top, and questions the society that demands we wear so few. Monday Night In Westerbork is best described as your typical queer, cross-dressed, song-and-dance stand up comedy Holocaust show.

Marriage Memories

Columbia suggests throwing an event called Marriage Memories. Locate a local same-sex Jewish couple willing to speak to students about their wedding ceremony (if both spouses can attend all the better). Ask the couple to bring photos, video, etc, and at the event make sure to provide cake, and faux champagne. Ask the couple to describe how they met, why they decided to marry, what their ceremony looked like, and what the ceremony meant to them. This is a positive way for students to celebrate both Queer and Jewish identities by exploring something positive, affirming, and exciting. Alternatively, this could be an exciting interfaith program

if Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist, etc. couples were invited to also share the stories of their same-sex wedding ceremonies.

Queer the Jewish Texts

Offering a study group or informal educational opportunity to explore same-sex desire and/or gender non-conformity within Jewish texts is a wonderful thing to offer. From the David and Jonathan story (see Text Exploration), to the deathly tragedy of Resh Lakish and R. Yochanan, to the platonic love of Naomi and Ruth, to a second look at the fascinating Rebecca (butch) and Isaac (femme) relationship, using a critical, Queer, and Feminist lens to examine Jewish texts can help students feel intrigued, engaged, and empowered.

Who is he? He is she. Me is who: Lessons from Transgender Jews

University of Minnesota organized an educational presentation and panel discussion about transgender issues from a Jewish perspective, specifically targeted towards Jewish and Queer students, but was open to the entire campus community. The presentation began with a definition of terms and an explanation of the range of experiences of trans people. The founding director of the University of Minnesota's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Programs Office led this section. The first panelist was a field coordinator for the School of Social Work and previously a rabbinical student and Jewish educator. The second panelist was a trainer and public speaker in the LGBTQ community for over fifteen years. The third panelist was a University of Minnesota student majoring in Hebrew studies and a member of Keshet, Hillel, and the QSCC.

CONFERENCES AND RETREATS

Annual NUJLS Conference

Numerous campuses have chosen to send student delegates to the Annual NUJLS Conference. NUJLS is the National Union of Jewish Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, and Intersex Students, and each year there is a conference, which is held at different colleges each year. These conferences feature speakers, text study, and workshops on topics such as Judaism and queerness, activism, relationships, ethics, coming out, and politics, as well as providing an opportunity for students to build community, network, and practice Judaism in a queer context. Columbia University is proud to host the 2008 conference February 8th-10th, and queer Jews from all over the country are invited to attend.

Queer Jewish Shabbaton

Maybe your campus is full of Queer Jewish students, maybe it only has two or three students. Either way, getting together with Queer Jews at neighboring campus can be a big draw, and a lot of fun. In New York City, Columbia/Barnard Hillel gathered students from Princeton, NYU, Rutgers, and the SUNY schools for services at the LGBTQ synagogue, a special dinner, and a night on the town. On your campus this might mean creating your own special experience right in your Hillel/Interfaith building. If Queer Jewish students are feeling isolated, remember that your neighboring campuses are a resource for increasing the size and diversity of Queer Jewish community.

was changed dramatically. By 1963 he had become the most successful pop manager in history. Tracing the rise and fall of the man behind the biggest cultural revolution of our time, “The Brian Epstein Story” reveals Epstein’s profound sense of himself as both a Jewish and gay outsider. The realization that he was gay before the emergence of the gay rights movement only increased his despair. Epstein was able to rescue himself and break out of his provincial existence by reinventing himself through his association with the Beatles.

4) **Brother Born Again**, 2000, English A documentary about the relationship between Julia Pimsleur and her brother Marc. Ten years ago, Marc abandoned their Jewish heritage and joined a born-again Christian community on a small island in Southeast Alaska. The film, directed by Julia Pimsleur, explores the family’s fear that Marc’s religion is a cult and the deep rift that forms between them. In the film, Julia goes to Alaska to find her brother and attempt to understand his new faith. How did Marc come to choose the Gospels as his life path? Can he bring himself to talk to his bisexual, secular, Jewish, liberal New York City sister? Will all his opinions be a recitation of scripture? Will all her thoughts be recitations from the Lesbian Guide?

5) **Bubbeh Lee and Me**, 1996, English (Emmy Award nominee) Bubbeh Lee and Me is an intimate and hilarious portrait of an extraordinary Jewish grandmother and a touching account of her gay grandson’s search for his place in the world.

6) **But I was a girl: The story of Freida Belinfante**, 1999, Dutch w/ English ST A dapper butch with prodigious musical talent, Frieda Belinfante cut quite a figure in 1930s Amsterdam. Born into a musical family to a Jewish father and Christian mother, Belinfante was the first woman to have her own symphony orchestra. When her promising career was cut short by the German occupation, Belinfante became active in the Resistance and helped many Jews escape from the Nazi-controlled Netherlands before fleeing to Switzerland and finally to America. In this lovely documentary, Belinfante’s childhood home movies are poetically projected onto various surfaces in her study as her life story movingly unfolds.

7) **Crows**, 1987, Hebrew w/ English subtitles Maggie, a 17 year old, is ignored by her family and runs away to Tel Aviv where she lives as a homeless youngster. She is taken in by a group of homosexuals. The film chronicles their lives together on the streets of Tel Aviv.

8) **Don’t Cry for Me Edinburgh**, 1996, Hebrew w/ English subtitles

A very funny documentary that traces the problems of a gay-themed Israeli theatre troupe as they stage their play at the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland. The film explores their personal as well as their professional lives. The troupe is disappointed when they must play to a nearly empty theater, until they are saved by an appearance by Hasida, a well known Israeli drag performer, who promotes the show at an Edinburgh Gay festival.

9) **Fresh Blood: A Consideration of Belonging**, 1996, English

Having left her native Israel at the age of 7, Yael returns to her homeland with her mother and sister, taking her camera along for the journey. During this illuminating visit, she discovers her mother’s Arab and Iraqi heritage and reunites with her biological father, who she hasn’t seen in 24 years. On a decidedly queer note, there is a day trip to Sodom and a performance by Israel’s only professional male belly dancer.

10) **The Gay Games**, 2000, Hebrew with English ST This high-spirited documentary follows members of the 1998 Israeli Gay Games contingent as they take Amsterdam by storm. Will the Israeli lesbian basketball team make it to their game against Germany on time? Who will win medals? Will it be all fun and games, or are there serious issues to be confronted during the trip? How do the games react to the headliner, the Israeli, transgendered pop diva, Dana International?

11) **A Holocaust Family Album**, 1988, English

A biography of five lesbian daughters of Holocaust survivors.

12) **Hineini: Coming Out in a Jewish High School**, 2005, English

Hineini, (Hebrew for “Here I Am”), chronicles the transformative impact of one student’s courageous campaign to establish a gay/straight alliance at the Gann Academy (formerly the New Jewish High School) in Waltham, Massachusetts. This is the potent story of a community wrestling with the very definition of pluralism and diversity in a Jewish context.

13) **It’s a Boy! Journeys from Male to Female**, 2001, English What do people who have lived as women have to tell us about what it is like to live as men? What does it mean to change from being a woman of color to being a man of color? How does it feel to switch from being a hardcore lesbian separatist to being a straight white male? Or to have identified as a Jewish, butch dyke for 30-plus years, to later pray at the male side of the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem? In exploring the experiences of three individuals, this film broadens understanding of what it means to be male, female, both and more.

14) **Love Story**, 1997, English

A documentary about a lesbian relationship between Lilly Wust, a Nazi party mother, and Felice Schrader, a disguised member of the Jewish resistance. The two remained together even after Wust discovered Schrader's true identity. Their story is told by Wust herself.

15) **Outlaw**, 1994, English

An interview with Leslie Feinberg about activism and her personal struggles.

16) **Paper Dolls**, 2006, Hebrew/English A documentary film about a group of transvestite Filipinos who emigrate to Israel to take care of elderly religious Jewish men. On their one day off per week, they perform as drag performers in a group called the Paper Dolls. The film explores the perils of global immigration. Moreover, the film is about people who are rejected by their own families for being gay/transvestite and who emigrate and end up with jobs taking care of other people's parents who have been rejected by their own children because they are old, difficult, etc. These very different people (elderly religious Jews and Filipino transvestites) form very deep familial bonds.

17) **Paragraph 175**, 2000, English A touching documentary that interviews survivors of the Holocaust who had been interred in concentration camps for being homosexual. Real footage and very powerful interviews are utilized, all linked by Rupert Everett's narration to tell a very powerful story. The men who tell their stories onscreen are at turns brave, wry and heartbreakingly vulnerable.

18) **Ruth and Connie: Every Room in the House**, 2002, English

They're Jewish, they're grandmothers, and they're lesbians. Ruth Berman and Connie Kurtz first met in Brooklyn in 1959, both young married women raising their young children. Becoming fast friends, they soon both moved with their families near Coney Island. Then, in 1974, something incredible happened - they fell in love. Though struggling with homophobia, both society's and their own, Ruth and Connie decided to leave their marriages and children for one another. While it hasn't always been smooth sailing, they've ridden out the rough spots with humor, passion, and wisdom. Redefines "family values."

19) **Trembling Before G-d**, 2000, English This feature-length documentary is about Orthodox Jews who come out as gays and lesbians and as a result must reconcile their sexual orientation their tradition. They struggle with

a way to negotiate their sexuality and identity within a religious community and ultimately question how they can pursue truth and faith in their lives. Shot over five years in Brooklyn, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami, and London, the film is an international project with global implications that strike at the core of the rapidly growing religious world. A sad, poignant, and eye-opening documentary about faith, belonging, love, and tradition.

20) **A Woman's Heart**, 1990, Hebrew

A documentary about Zalman Shoshi- one of Israel's best known drag queens.

Fiction (Drama/Comedy/Musical)

1) **Aimee & Jaguar**, 1999, German with English subtitles

A fictionalized portrayal of the lives of Lilly Wurst and Felice Schrader, a Jewish and German lesbian couple during Nazi Germany.

2) **Anne Trister**, 1985, French w/ English subtitles Art student Anne Trister has a Jewish father and a gentile mother. Her father's death is what moves her to leave school and her lover in Switzerland behind and travel to Montreal in Canada for the last rites. She stays with an older friend, Alix, who tries to help Anne to relate to her Jewish roots. Anne is fascinated by the story and by Alix and falls in love with her.

3) **Before Chaos**, 2000, English On the day of his son's Bar Mitzvah, a psychiatrist is about to have a breakdown. He has a problem with monogamy. When the family arrives at Anshe Chesed on Manhattan's Upper West Side, the bar mitzvah boy, his parents, his pushy grandparents, and his father's other love interest (or interests) all come together for quite a unique Bar Mitzvah.

4) **The Bubble**, 2006, Hebrew w/ English subtitles

Three young Israelis, two guys and a girl, share an apartment in Tel Aviv's hippest neighborhood. Trying to put aside political conflicts and focusing on their lives and loves, these progressive 20-somethings are often accused of living in a sort of escapist bubble.

5) **Everything Relative**, 1996, English Everything Relative, is about the members of a fictional all-female political theatre troupe who reunite several years later and compare the paths they have taken. They are reunited on the occasion of a brit-milah of the child of one of its members (who was artificially inseminated).

6) **Good Boys**, 2005, Hebrew 17-year-old Meni works as a rent boy. He had a baby from Mika, a young drug addict prostitute. He has an adoptive mother who is also a trans-gender prostitute and clients that contact him on his cell-phone. One night he meets Tal, also a hustler and they decide to spend the night together. During that night their lives get a new meaning, but can the little hope change the life they are used to from early age?

7) **Gotta Have Heart**, 1998, Hebrew w/ English subtitles Set in small town Israel, where the only entertainment is the local Israeli folk dance club, Gotta Have Heart follows the adventures of best friends Gur and Mitzi as they lust after Merito, the new stud on the block. Caught in between them is sweet Nohav-madly in love with Gur, obsessed with Eurovison and desperate to be asked to dance.

8) **Hit and Runway**, 1999, English Alex is a young, straight Italian-American writer. Alex takes a screenwriting class where he meets Elliot, an older, nebishy, gay, Jewish writer. Alex sees an opportunity to learn scriptwriting from Elliot. The two begin to meet regularly in Elliot's place. Elliot and Alex become odd couple roommates.

9) **Rega'im (outside Israel as Each Other)**, 1979, Hebrew

A chance meeting between a French woman and an Israeli woman spark memories of a past encounter.

10) **Torch Song Trilogy**, 1989, English Arnold Beckoff is a gay, Jewish, female impersonator in New York City who is searching for love and respect from (1) a schoolteacher, (2) a fashion model, (3) and his mother. Based on the play by Harvey Fierstein.

11) **Walk on Water**, 2004, Hebrew w/ English subtitles

Walk on Water is a tale of revenge, guilt, and redemption. In the film, a Mossad agent pretends to be a tour guide to a gay German tourist in order to find the whereabouts of the tourist's Nazi grandfather.

12) **Yentl**, 1983, English A young girl who defies tradition by discussing and debating Jewish law and theology with her rabbi father. When he dies, she cuts her hair, dresses as a man, and sets out to find a yeshiva where she can continue to study Talmud and live secretly as a male named Anshel. When her study partner Avigdor discovers the truth, Yent asserts that she is "neither one sex nor the other" and has "the soul of a man in the body of a woman."

13) **Yossi and Jagger**, 2002, Hebrew w/ English subtitles

The story is of the love affair between two Israeli army officers. Yossi is a brooding commander. Jagger is one of his squad leaders, open minded and deft. They are stationed at the Lebanese border in the Golan in bitter cold and snow. The group has an amalgam of slightly off kilter soldiers. The territory is dangerous, and their secret relationship is dangerous as well.

Film Resources

(i.e. Good places to find information, more titles, and new stuff)

Online search engines

imdb.com

Jewish Gays and Lesbians in Films: <http://www.amazon.com/Jewish-Gays-Lesbians-Film/lm/UGR71HY3EWP9>

Jewish LGBTQ Film and Video:

<http://www.onearchives.org/twiceblessed/filmag.html>

The Online Jewish Film Archive of LESBIAN / GAY / QUEER JEWRY

<http://www.jewishfilm.com/jewsub.html#Gay>

Gay Jewish Films on Amazon <http://www.amazon.com/Jewish-Gays-Lesbians-Film/lm/UGR71HY3EWP9>

Good video rental houses (national and local)

www.netflix.com

http://www.filmbaby.com/about_us

LGBTQ specific or friendly TV channels

LOGO

www.villagetv.com

HereTV <http://www.heretv.com>

Listing of LGBTQ Film Festivals

PlanetOut listing of gay lesbian transgender bisexual queer movie festivals

www.planetout.com/popcornq/fests

Jewish Film Festivals

The National Foundation for Jewish Culture Listing of Jewish Film Festivals:

<http://www2.jewishculture.org/disciplines/media-arts/film-festivals>

Specific Jewish LGBTQ Film/Media Organizations

Lilith Magazine <http://www.lilith.org> (Feminist Magazine)

Zeek

<http://www.zeek.net> (Gay friendly Jewish magazine)

PERFORMANCE

Theater

Note/Disclaimer: This section may be most useful for Jewish theatre groups looking to perform Jewish Queer theatre rather than for finding performances to view. Consider local theatre resources for viewing opportunities, will vary by location.

A comprehensive list of Queer Jewish plays last updated in 1998:

<http://www.onearchives.org/twiceblessed/plays.html>

1) **And Now, For My Next Life**, 1992 Gay actor Steve Goldring's one-man musical autobiography is not bad. He sings and chats, laying out his story for us: from growing up in a middle-class Ohio-Jewish household to living with the HIV virus. The show's main problem stems from Goldring being the writer, songster (with R.G. Murphy) and director: too many hats and no one to run interference. His strongest song is 'Dodging Bullets (is a game)' about the current perils of sexual congress with others, but there's too much hectoring in his AIDS lecturing. Goldring is an engaging performer, although not a well-trained actor, and what works best is his determination to make the most of what time he has left. But the ending is too mawkish and sentimental, and the evening only fitfully comes alive.

2) **Bent**, 1979 A play concerning a gay love affair set against the backdrop of Nazi persecution of homosexuals during World War II.

3) **Dany's Gift**, 1992 This scene is an excerpt from a work in progress which deals with Jewish/Palestinian relations and the ways that they

impact directly on a particular Jewish family. The play locates itself within the Lesbian community as its main character Dany, a lesbian co-mother deals with her grandmother and her grandmother's attitudes towards her lesbianism and her pro-Palestinian activism. Dany's lover Rhonda has died and in this scene Rhonda's Bubby Sarah is remembering her granddaughter to the Golden Age Club Volunteer, Mrs. Spivack.

4) **Homo for the Holidays**, 1992 A comedy revue with music presents a uniquely gay and lesbian perspective on a wide range of traditional holidays including two sketches about Chanukah.

5) **Jew Meat**, 1993

A three-person, two-hour performance piece about the intersection of gay and Jewish life which takes place (metaphorically speaking) on the cultural corner where the Borscht Belt meets Castro Street, the place where Yiddishkeit and Fabu-keit come together. Written and performed by John Ellis, Doug Sadownick and Matt Silverstein.

6) **Nazi/Jew/Queer**, 1993 My tack is to link my Jewish background, anti-Semitism and homosexuality. I was researching the Holocaust and thinking about the connection to my being gay. Then last year I was bashed and discovered that such violence is a rite of passage for neo-Nazi groups. That's when I started to think about the eroticizing of skinheads and violence in a section of gay culture. I'm not opposed to that, but it's ironic that these skinheads are the people who are out there bashing gays." Achtman ties all three ideas together in a trio of contemporary monologues involving a queer, a neo-Nazi and a Jewish figure with his own racist biases.

7) **Visiting Mr. Green**, 1996 Chronicles the relationship of two Jewish men: a cantankerous, disoriented 86-year-old widower living in poverty in a New York City apartment, and a 25-year-old gay corporate executive. Brought together by court order after the younger man drives into Mr. Green as he crosses the street, they have conflicts in lifestyle, values, and expectations.

Music

Note: Consider inviting artists to perform for your campus, putting together a Hillel music library, or having a Queer Jewish dance party/music video screening.

1) **Corinne Alal**

Corinne Alal was born in Tunis and immigrated to Israel with her

family at the age of eight. Throughout her long career as a songwriter and performer, she has consistently created original, uncompromising music. Alal's music is at once political, folksy, edgy, and moving. She is an open lesbian.

2) William Finn

Contemporary Broadway composer William Finn is a heavily autobiographical text writer. His topics are the gay and Jewish experiences in contemporary America, and very often conflict, loyalty, family, belonging, sickness, healing, and loss. Finn is especially well noted for his work on *Falsettos* which won the 1992 Tony Awards for Best Music and Lyrics and for Best Book. More recently, Finn scored another Broadway success with *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, for which he wrote both music and lyrics. The show won two Tony Awards in 2005; one for Best Book of a Musical, and another for the Best Performance by a Featured Actor in a Musical, and toured the United States in 2006.

3) Ari Gold

As an independent recording artist Ari Gold is bringing his bold and soulful blend of R&B, Pop and Dance music to legions of fans around the globe on his own terms. Ari has been featured on VH-1, MTV Europe, LOGO, HBO Zone, Here!, IFC and received critical acclaim from trade papers, Billboard and HITS. The press has already coined Gold a gay icon.

4) Gay Iz Mir

The San Francisco-based band Gay Iz Mir occupies the distinctive position of being "the only gay, lesbian, queer, bi, trans, straight synagogue Klezmer house band in the world." The band's members are also members of Sha'ar Zahav. These are not professional musicians; they play Klezmer for fun. Yet their reach is by no means limited: they have played for the San Francisco Pride parade as well as for weddings, commitment ceremonies, bar and bat mitzvahs.

5) Dana International

Dana International is an Israeli transsexual pop singer of Yemenite origin, who won the 1998 Eurovision Song Contest for her song "Diva." Next to original songs, Dana International is known for her cover versions of old hits. She has so far released eight albums and a further three compilation albums and has worked closely with other Israeli artists, including DJ Offer Nissim. She made an appearance as both a guest presenter and performer at the 50th anniversary Eurovision concert in October 2005, when her 1998

winner *Diva* was nominated as one of the 14 finalists in the search for the greatest Eurovision song.

6) Ivri Lider

<http://www.ivrilider.com>

Ivri Lider, a star on the Israel pop scene, self-penned his 1997 debut album *Melatef Umeshaker* (Caressing and Lying). The singles "Leonardo" and "Tamid Ahava" ("Always Love") were instant radio hits and the album went platinum in Israel. It was around the time of his second platinum album that Lider decided to speak openly about his sexual orientation. He gave a cover-story interview revealing his homosexuality in the daily newspaper *Maariv*. Since that time, Lider's popularity has only grown and he has released four more albums.

7) Yehuda Poliker

Yehuda Poliker is an Israeli singer-songwriter of Greek ancestry. His music combines rock with Greek and other Mediterranean musical styles. He plays the guitar, bouzouki, and *baDlama*. He was a member of the popular 1980s Israeli rock group *Benzeen* (also spelled *Benzin*).

8) The Klezmatics

<http://www.klezmatics.com/about.php>

The Klezmatics, founded in 1986, were the first Klezmer band to link up with the surge in queer activism; today they are one of the world's most well-known Klezmer ensembles. They came together through a newspaper classified ad. The group's original two out musicians, Alicia Svigals and Lorin Sklamberg (current member), nudged the group in a queer direction. The Klezmatics are one of the leading Klezmer bands in the world today.

9) The Isle of Klezbos

<http://www.metropolitanklezmer.com/index.html>

This soulful, fun-loving powerhouse Klezmer sextet approaches tradition with irreverence and respect. Since their 1998 debut, *Isle of Klezbos* has toured North America and Europe, from Seattle's *Bumbershoot* to Brooklyn's *BAM* cafe to Vienna's *KlezMORE*: concert stages, nightclubs, synagogues, festivals, colleges, and even studio sessions for *The L Word*. Their *OutMusic* Awardwinning recordings have topped world music charts at home and abroad, and their exuberance led the *Village Voice* to proclaim: "These women will make you shake your tushies!"

10) Steven Sondheim

Stephen Joshua Sondheim is an American stage musical and film composer and lyricist, one of the few people to win an Academy Award, multiple Tony Awards (seven, more than any other composer), multiple Grammy Awards, and a Pulitzer Prize. [1] His most famous scores include (as composer/lyricist) A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Company, Follies, A Little Night Music, Sweeney Todd, Sunday in the Park with George, Into the Woods, and Assassins, as well as the lyrics for West Side Story and Gypsy.

Speakers

Below you will find a very cursory list of important figures in the Queer Jewish American world. This list is far from extensive and most of the speakers reside in the epicenters of Queer Jewish life (New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco). However, interesting scholars, rabbis, teachers, and activists, live around the country. If you are looking for a local speaker, we suggest talking to your local LGBTQ synagogue (see Organizations and Institutions) or Gay and Lesbian center. Also consider contacting a Hillel staff person or student group in your area who has already worked with Queer Jewish programming (see Human Resources). Remember that the authors of all the books mentioned in the literature section of this guide are excellent choices for speakers as well. (See also <http://www.jewishmosaic.org> and www.nehirim.org for a list of potential speakers)

1) Dr. Caryn Aviv; Denver, CO

(415) 652-2210 <http://www.jewishmosaic.org/page/contact>

Dr. Caryn Aviv, Jewish Mosaic's research director, is a Marsico lecturer in the School of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences at the University of Denver, and academic director of the Certificate Program in Jewish Communal Service in the university's Graduate School of Social Work. Aviv, along with David Shneer, is the author of "New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora", published in October 2005 by New York University Press. Aviv and Shneer have also co-authored the forthcoming "American Queer, Now and Then" (Paradigm Publishers, 2006), and co-edited the anthology "Queer Jews" (Routledge 2002). Dr. Aviv's new book project, entitled Peace Camps, explores gender and national identity politics in two conflict resolution programs for Israeli and Palestinian youth. She conducts research on and teaches in the areas of gender, sexuality, Zionism, Israel and contemporary Jewish cultures.

2) S Bear Bergman; North Hampton, MA and Toronto, ON

www.sbearbergman.com

bear@sbearbergman.com bookings@sbearbergman.com

Artist, activist, storyteller and scholar S. Bear Bergman is the author and performer of three award-winning plays about the intersections between and among gender, sexuality and Jewish identity, as well as the book *Butch Is A Noun* (Suspect Thoughts Press, 2006) and numerous essays on queer and Jewish culture. Bergman serves on the board of NUJLS (The National Union of LGBT Students), and works extensively with Hillels across North America on creating a welcoming space for LGBT students.

3) Gabriel Blau; New York, NY

(914) 833-7719 gabriel@godandsexuality.org

Gabriel Blau is an activist and teacher whose main focus is teaching activism and Torah texts. For eight years Blau has spoken at countless conferences, programs, camps and colleges in the US and abroad. He has been a guest on NPR and Israeli radio, and his work has been covered in the New York Times and local papers in the US and Israel. Blau was the director of the God & Sexuality Conference, is a faculty member of Nehirim, sits on the Advisory Committee of the LGBTQ Religious Archives Network in Chicago, and runs GayGevalt.com, an online community calendar and resource for LGBTQ Jewish events in the United States.

4) Warren Blumenfeld; Ames, Iowa

wblumen@iastate.edu

Dr. Warren Blumenfeld is an assistant professor of multicultural education at Iowa State University. Blumenfeld is the author of *Homophobia: How We all Pay the Price, Looking at Gay and Lesbian Life, AIDS and Your Religious Community: A Hand On Guide for Local Programs and Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*. He researches and speaks on a variety of interesting topics including: the formation of Gay Straight Alliances, the intersection of anti-Semitism and homophobia, how to make universities safe spaces for LGBTQ students, and how homophobia affects Greek life on campus.

5) Kate Bornstein

<http://www.katebornstein.com/KatePages/indexkb.htm>

Kate Bornstein is an author, playwright and performance artist. Her

latest book, *Hello, Cruel World: 101 Alternatives to Suicide for Teens, Freaks, and Other Outlaws*, hits the bookshelves in July, 2006. Bornstein's published works include the books *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us*; and *My Gender Workbook*. Bornstein's plays and performance pieces include *Strangers in Paradox*, *Hidden: A Gender*, *The Opposite Sex Is Neither*, *Virtually Yours*, and *y2kate: gender virus 2000*. Bornstein's books are taught in over 120 colleges and universities around the world; and ze has performed hir work live on college campuses, and in theaters and performance spaces across the USA, as well as in Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Austria. She is currently touring colleges, youth conferences and high schools, speaking and leading workshops on the subjects of sex, gender, and alternatives to teen suicide.

6) Daniel Boyarin; Berkley, CA

(510)642-8256 boyarin@socrates.berkeley.edu

Professor Boyarin teaches Talmudic Culture, Nearest Studies, and Gay and Lesbian Studies at Berkley. Dr. Boyarin is an important scholar in areas of both Jewish and Gay interest. Among his important contributions to the Jewish Queer world is a book he co-wrote entitled, *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*.

7) Paul Cohen; San Francisco, CA

(415)383-8954 pcohen@hillel.org

Paul Cohen, is the retired regional director of Hillel in Northern California and can discuss issues of integrating the LGBTQIA community into the Hillel sphere. Cohen worked with former Hillel President Avraham Infeld to create domestic partner benefits for Hillel employees. Cohen is also an active member of Sha'ar Zahav, the LGBTQ synagogue of San Francisco.

8) Gregg Drinkwater; Denver, CO

(604) 573-5158 http://www.jewishmosaic.org/page/show_user/8

Drinkwater is Executive Director of Jewish Mosaic: The National Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity. Drinkwater has been a volunteer in a variety of capacities with LGBTQ, Jewish, and social justice organizations for over 17 years, most recently serving as the vice-chair of the community funding panel of the Gay and Lesbian Fund for Colorado, helping co-found Kehilateynu, Denver's LGBTQ Jewish network, and serving as a member of

the advisory committee of the Hearts and Hands Homemaker program at Jewish Family Service of Colorado

9) Sandi Simcha DuBowski; New York, NY

info@tremblingbeforeg-d.com

Sandi Simcha DuBowski is a filmmaker and writer based in New York. His current project, *Trembling Before G-d* is currently in theatrical release in the United States, Israel, Canada, Germany, and in 2003, France, UK, Argentina, and Czech Republic (in the U.S. with New Yorker Films). *Trembling* has been the recipient of twelve awards including The Mayor's Prize for the Jewish Experience at the Jerusalem Film Festival, The GLAAD Media Award for Best Documentary, and The Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary at OUTFEST Los Angeles. The L.A. Weekly named it one of the 10 Best Films of 2001. DuBowski is now the producer of a film called *In the Name of Allah*, about the complex intersection of Islam with homosexuality, currently being shot in US, UK, France, and Pakistan.

10) Rabbi Lisa Edwards; Los Angeles, CA

(323) 931-7023 ext. 200 lisa@bcc-la.org

Lisa A. Edwards has been the rabbi of Beth Chayim Chadashim (BCC) (The world's first LGBTQ synagogue) since August 1994, but her connections to BCC predate that. While a rabbinic student studying in Los Angeles, Rabbi Edwards was first a BCC member (from 1989) and later a student rabbi at BCC (Fall 1991-Summer 1992). She returned to BCC in her current position right after ordination.

Rabbi Edwards holds an A.B. degree from Brown University, a Master's in English Literature from the University of Chicago, and a Ph.D. in Literature from the University of Iowa, in Iowa City, where she wrote a dissertation entitled, *Restoring Voices: Traditional Jewish Sources in Post-Holocaust Jewish American Fiction*. Rabbi Edwards attended rabbinical school at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at its Jerusalem, Los Angeles and New York campuses, receiving a master's degree in Hebrew Letters in 1991 and ordination in 1994.

11) Rabbi Denise Eger; Los Angeles, CA

Rabbi@kol-ami.org (323) 606-0996, x 101

Rabbi Denise L. Eger is the spiritual leader at Congregation Kol-Ami (an LGBTQ synagogue in West Hollywood, CA) Rabbi Eger holds a B.A. in Religion from the University of Southern California. She received her

Masters Degree from Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion and was ordained at the New York campus in 1988. She has worked in congregations with people of all ages, families and individuals, and has done extensive work with people with AIDS. Rabbi Eger has published extensively on human sexuality, interfaith dialogue and human rights and has appeared on television and radio as an expert in these areas.

12) Eytan Fox; Israel.

Famous Israeli filmmaker, Eytan Fox, was born in New York City and moved with his family to Israel when he was two years old. Fox's films have been met critical acclaim worldwide. His three most recent films have all gained significant attention for their expert artistry and for their poignant look at Israeli society from a distinctly gay perspective. They include Yossi and Jagger (2002), Walk on Water (2004), and The Bubble (2006).

13) Barney Frank; Washington DC / Massachusetts

<http://www.barneyfrank.net>

Barney Frank is a member of the US House of Representatives. He is a Democrat and has represented Massachusetts's 4th congressional district since 1981. Following the Democratic takeover of the House of Representatives in the 2006 midterm elections, Frank assumed the chairmanship of the House Financial Services Committee. Frank is very active in issues of concern to both Gay and Jewish Americans. He is one of only two openly gay people to serve in the House of Representatives.

14) Scott Fried; New York, NY

<http://www.scottfried.com/>

Scott Fried is a national public speaker, health educator, actor, and author. Fried begins each lecture with his story of how he got infected with HIV in 1987 at the age of 24, during his first and only unsafe sexual encounter. He is the author of two books. *If I Grow Up: Talking with Teens* about AIDS, *Love and Staying Alive* is a moving chronicle of his experiences and lectures. *My Invisible Kingdom: Letters From the Secret Lives of Teens*, presents a cross-section of the thousands of letters from students who have written to Scott in an attempt to share their pain and doubt on such diverse topics as rape, eating disorders, suicide, self-mutilation, coming out, addiction and broken hearts.

15) Rabbi Steve Greenberg; New York, NY

SteveGreenberg@wrestlingwithGodandmen.com www.clal.org

Rabbi Steve Greenberg is an award-winning author and a noted teacher. Rabbi Greenberg is a Senior Teaching Fellow at CLAL The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, was featured in the acclaimed 2001 film *Trembling Before G-d*, about Orthodox gay Jews, and has appeared in over 500 post-screening community dialogues throughout the world. A popular speaker on issues of faith, sexuality, and tradition, Rabbi Greenberg helped organize the first Orthodox Mental Health Conference on homosexuality, and has worked with numerous families in reconciliation. Rabbi Greenberg is also the winner of the Koret Book Award for Philosophy and Thought, for his well-received book *Wrestling with God & Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), which explores homosexuality and Jewish tradition. The book was also selected as a finalist for the Lambda Literary Awards.

16) Idit Klein; Boston, MA

(617) 524-9227 idit@boston-keshet.org

After graduating from Yale University, Idit Klien moved to Israel where she became a community organizer in the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community of Jerusalem. Returning to the states in the late nineties, Idit put her time into Keshet, a small volunteer-run organization dedicated to creating a welcoming and inclusive Jewish LGBTQ community. Determined to expand the organization, Idit worked tirelessly to raise money and organize in the Jewish community and in 2001 Idit was hired to be the executive director. Now, Keshet offers workshops, support groups, social events, and an initiative to advocate for equal rights for same-sex couples. Idit's work in schools and synagogues has been instrumental in developing a consciousness of LGBTQ issues in the Jewish community both locally and internationally. With a new film and teacher's guide due out this year, Keshet plans to continue outreach across the country.

17) Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum; New York, NY

(212) 929-9498 ext.17 www.cbst.org

Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, has been the Senior Rabbi of New York City's Congregation Beth Simchat Torah (CBST) since 1992. (CBST is New York City's LGBTQ synagogue). Prior to joining CBST, Rabbi Kleinbaum was Director of Congregational Relations at the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism in Washington, DC, 1990-1992. Rabbi Kleinbaum has testified in Federal Court and before the U.S. Congress in hearings on the subject of same-sex marriage. She attended the President's White House meeting of national religious leaders in 1999. Rabbi Kleinbaum has been

a speaker or a panelist at numerous feminist and gay rights conferences. She has frequently been engaged to speak about same-sex marriage, Judaism & homosexuality, gay synagogues, and Judaism and social justice. A book of her sermons, *Listening for the Oboe*, has been published by CBST. Rabbi Kleinbaum has been named one of the country's Top 50 Jewish leaders by *The Forward*, and *Jewish Week*.

18) Rabbi Elliot Rose Kukla; San Francisco, CA

ekukla@gmail.com

Rabbi Elliot Rose Kukla is the rabbi of the Danforth Jewish Circle in Toronto, a grassroots congregation grounded in social justice and inclusion. Elliot has been an activist and community organizer for more than a decade and currently also serves as the rabbi in residence of Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ) in New York City. He has been involved in transgender activism and education since 2000 and writes and teaches about the spiritual and theological implications of gender diversity in Judaism for men, women and everybody else. He offers educational trainings, pastoral and ritual support to congregations and Jewish organizations across the US and Canada to help them create dynamic communities that welcome transgender and gender nonconforming members.

19) Joel L. Kushner; Los Angeles, CA

213-749-3424 ext. 4240 jkushner@huc.edu

<http://elearning.huc.edu/jhvrc/ijso.php>

Dr. Joel L. Kushner serves as Director for the Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles. The IJSO provides a myriad of resources and services, including LGBTQ liturgies and life-cycle rituals, field internships, academic conferences, and consulting to community groups. In the mid 1980s, Dr. Kushner volunteered for Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) in New York, participated in several of the first AIDS education programs conducting outreach as well as led groups focused on education and behavior change. He also volunteered with the Deaf AIDS Project focusing on curriculum design. In Los Angeles, Dr. Kushner served for three years on the Board of Directors of LAGPA, the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy Association

20) Amichai Lau-Lavie; New York, NY

(212) 245-8188 amichai@storahtelling.org

President of Storahtelling, Executive & Artistic Director, and an actor, Amichai Lau-Lavie is an Israeli-born mythologist, storyteller and teacher of Judaic Literature, recently hailed by *Time Out NY* as 'Super Star of David' and 'iconoclastic mystic,' and as 'one of the most interesting thinkers in the Jewish world' by the *NY Jewish Week*. Lau-Lavie is a Synagogue 2000 fellow, a consultant to the Reboot Network, and the recipient of a Joshua Venture Fellowship award 2002-2004. He serves on the Board of Directors of Bikkurim, an incubator for new Jewish ideas.

21) Rabbi Benay Lappe; Skokie, IL

www.svara.org info@svara.org

Executive Director and Rosh Yeshiva of SVARA a traditionally radical yeshiva (based in Chicago), Rabbi Lappe was ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York in 1997 and was the first openly lesbian Conservative rabbi. She is an award-winning teacher and is nationally known for her unique approach to the Talmud, which she has taught at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia, the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, and The Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, where she is a Visiting Professor of Talmud. Rabbi Lappe is an Associate at CLAL—The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, a cutting-edge Jewish think tank in New York City, and is the Resident Rabbinic Scholar at Aitz Hayim Center for Jewish Living in Highland Park, IL. Rabbi Lappe's greatest joy is learning Talmud with other queer folk, and shabbos and Talmud study are her primary ways of doing Jewish.

22) Rabbi Joshua Lesser; Atlanta, GA

(404)-315-6446

<http://home.bellsouth.net/p/s/community.dll?ep=16&groupid=60017&ck>

Rabbi Joshua Lesser, M.H.L is the spiritual leader of the growing Congregation Bet Haverim ("A Reconstructionist Synagogue Founded For Lesbians and Gay Men Embracing All Jews and Loved Ones.") As a former Teach For America corps member and a founding member of Camp Big Heart, a camp for mentally disabled people of all ages, Rabbi Lesser understands the importance of addressing children from a place of respect. At Bet Haverim, Rabbi Lesser saw a need to create a safe space for LGBTQ folks, as well as their families. So in partnership with the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta and Jewish Family & Career Services, he founded a place of support and information: The Rainbow Center. He has also served on the boards of PFLAG, the Anti-Defamation League, and Hillels of Georgia.

Rabbi Lesser helped in forming the Faith Alliance of Metro Atlanta, planning Atlanta's 9/11 interfaith memorial service and having served as the co-chair of Georgians Against Discrimination fight Georgia's Marriage Amendment. He guest lectures at all of the local area colleges on a variety of topics including ethics, homosexuality and religion and understanding Judaism. He is also an initial member of World Pilgrims traveling to Turkey and Jerusalem to foster interfaith partnerships and dialogue. Rabbi Lesser has also served as interim rabbi for Emory Hillel. He also participated in think tanks for Shleimut, a Jewish Healing Institute and STAR- Synagogue Transformation and Renewal.

23) Jay Michaelson; New York, NY

917.403.3989 jay@nehirim.org

<http://www.metatronics.net/about/>

Jay Michaelson is a writer and teacher whose work focuses on spirituality, Judaism, sexuality, and law. Michaelson is the director of Nehirim: A Spiritual Initiative for LGBTQ Jews, which runs retreats and discussion groups, and is a noted activist on behalf of LGBTQ religious communities. He wrote the Coming Out Ritual for the Human Rights Campaign, spoke at the New York state legislature on behalf of the Empire State Pride Agenda, and has appeared on countless panels and workshops on the intersection between sexuality and religion. His personal coming out story, his scholarship, and his outspoken rejection of the claim that the Bible forbids homosexuality have all been widely disseminated in the Jewish community.

24) Vanessa "Vinny" Prell; Washington DC

vprell@nujlonline.org

Vanessa "Vinny" Prell is the Executive Director of the National Union for Jewish Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, and Intersex Students (NUJLS). A longtime activist and educator and infrequent author, Vanessa speaks about queer/LGBTQ Jewish student issues, genderqueerness and Judaism, alternative sexualities and Judaism, as well as the experience of being raised Jewish in a bi-racial and interfaith family.

25) Noa Sattah; Jerusalem, Israel

noa@joh.org.il <http://www.worldpride.net/index.php?id=368>

Activist, educator, and community leader, Noa Sattah is the executive director of the Jerusalem Open House. In her capacity as director, Sattah is in constant contact with the Israeli press, tackles security issues, and fights

vocally and courageously for the rights of LGBTQ Israelis and Palestinians in a city that often seeks to silence her voice. She is an upstanding model of a brave, young, progressive mover and shaker.

26) David Shneer; Denver, CO

dshneer@du.edu

Dr. David Shneer, a co-founder of Jewish Mosaic, is an associate professor of history and director of the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Denver. His work concentrates on modern Jewish culture, Soviet Jewish history, and Jews and sexuality. His most recent books include "Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture" (Cambridge, 2004) and "New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora" (NYU Press, 2005) co-authored with Caryn Aviv. Shneer and Aviv are also co-authors of the forthcoming textbook "American Queer, Now and Then" (Paradigm Publishers, 2006) and co-edited the groundbreaking anthology "Queer Jews" (Routledge, 2002). As a board member of Jewish Mosaic and as a scholar, Shneer speaks widely about issues of Jews and sexuality, most recently giving talks about the role of LGBTQ Jews in advancing Jewish culture at Rejewvenation: The Future of Jewish Cultures, a conference held at the University of Toronto in October 2005.

27) Winnie Stachelberg

<http://www.americanprogress.org/experts/StachelbergWinnie.html>

Winnie Stachelberg is the Senior Vice President for External Affairs for the Center for American Progress. Prior to joining the Center, she spent 11 years with the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay civil rights organization. In January 2005 Stachelberg was appointed to the newly created position of Vice President of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation. Charged with revamping HRC's Foundation, Stachelberg's early priorities included building a think tank, launching a religion and faith program and rebuilding the National Coming Out Project. Previously, she was HRC's political director, initiating and leading the expansion of HRC's legislative, political and electoral strategies. Stachelberg joined HRC in 1994 as senior health policy advocate and helped to establish the organization as a key advocate in HIV/AIDS, lesbian health and other health care issues affecting the LGBTQ community.

28) Gordon Tucker; New York, NY

(914) 948-2800 ext. 115 g.tucker@templeisraelcenter.org

Rabbi Gordon Tucker has been a congregational rabbi since 1994. Rabbi Tucker joined the faculty of JTSA in 1976, and has taught there continuously ever since. He is currently Adjunct Assistant Professor of Jewish Philosophy. From 1984 to 1992, Rabbi Tucker was Dean of the Rabbinical School at JTSA, in which capacity he directed the training of over 200 rabbis. Rabbi Tucker is Honorary Chairman (and former Chairman) of the Board of the Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel, and served on the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly from 1982 to 2007. In the fight for the full equality of Gay men and Lesbians within the Conservative Movement, Rabbi Tucker has been a staunch ally, a tough fighter, and a fierce advocate. Rabbi Tucker's responsa on the inclusion of LGBTQ people into Conservative Jewish life is ground-breaking and filled with both tremendous heart and intellectual rigor. A model ally.

29) Randi Weingarten; New York, New York

http://www.uft.org/about/rw_bio/

Randi Weingarten is president of the United Federation of Teachers, representing more than 160,000 active and retired educators in the New York City public school system. She is also a vice-president of the American Federation of Teachers and of the New York City Central Labor Council (AFL-CIO) and heads the city's Municipal Labor Committee (MLC), an umbrella organization for 100-plus city unions. From 1986 to 1998 Weingarten served as counsel to UFT President Sandra Feldman, taking a lead role in contract negotiations and enforcement and in lawsuits in which the union fought for adequate school funding and building conditions. A teacher of history at Clara Barton HS in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, from 1991 to 1997, Weingarten helped her students win several state and national awards debating constitutional issues. Weingarten is vocal about both her Jewish and lesbian identities.

30) Reuben Zellman; San Francisco, CA

reuben@shaarzahav.org 415-861-6932 (x316)

Reuben Zellman is a third-year rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Zellman was the first openly transgendered person admitted as a rabbinic student at HUC. He worked in disability services before doing his post-baccalaureate work in music theory and classical voice at San Francisco State University. Zellman has been active in the transgender community since 1999, and has taught about gender, sexuality and Judaism at many congregations, conferences and universities around the U.S. He currently serves as the rabbinical intern at Congregation Sha'ar Zahav in San Francisco.

LITERATURE

Fiction

1) **Bloch, Alice.** *The Law of Return.* Boston: Alyson Press, 1983.

An American woman goes to Israel and explores lesbianism

2) **Chabon, Michael.** *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay.* (Picador, August 2001)

Samuel Klayman--self-described little man, city boy, and Jew--first meets Josef Kavalier when his mother shoves him aside in his own bed, telling him to make room for their cousin, a refugee from Nazi-occupied Prague. It's the beginning of a beautiful friendship. In short order, Sam's talent for pulp plotting meets Joe's faultless, academy-trained line, and a comic-book superhero is born. The Escapist "roams the globe, performing amazing feats and coming to the aid of those who languish in tyranny's chains!" This acclaimed novel is an exciting exploration of both Jewish and Gay identity as the plot reveals exciting twists and turns along the road of these men's relationship.

3) **Dykewoman, Elana.** *Beyond the Pale.* Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1997.

An epic about lesbians who immigrated to the United States in the great Russian Jewish immigration wave at the turn of the twentieth century. Chava, Rose, Gutke and Dovidia live not only outside the Pale of Settlement (areas of forced Jewish settlement in Russian towns) but also outside the pale of mainstream society. Settling in New York, the characters live through personal changes as well as social and political movements of the day, including unionization and the Triangle Shirtwaist fire

4) **Feinberg, Leslie.** *Stone Butch Blues.* Alyson Books (re-published 2003)

This novel follows the travails of Jess Goldberg. At its start she is a girl who feels confused by strict ideas about gender. Constantly searching, she quickly moves from trying on her father's suits to visiting bars and transforming herself into a full-blown "butch." As police crackdowns on gay bars result in more than one night in jail, Goldberg decides to begin taking male hormones and have a breast reduction in order to pass as a man. As the dramatic story unfolds issues of identity, community, and gender are further explored through Feinberg's beautiful prose.

5) **Felman, Jyl Lynn.** *Hot Chicken Wings*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1992.

Eleven short stories and an introduction (“The Forbidden, or What Makes Me a Jewish Lesbian Writer”) about Felman’s identity. The stories are loosely themed on ‘outsiderness’, but stand separately. Felman uses strong language and her seeming interest for food as a stand-in for sex is nothing new in Jewish-American writing.

6) **Newman, Leslea.** *A Letter to Harvey Milk*. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1988.

Nine stories revolving around Jewish/lesbian issues and the conflict between sexual-orientation and religious identities. A nice range of characters and even though the general theme remains constant, Newman touches on issues both contemporary and timeless.

7) **Newman, Leslea.** *Good Enough To Eat*. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1986.

The story of a protagonist who is a Jewish bulimic who comes to recovery through exploration of her previously hidden lesbianism.

8) **Newman, Leslea.** *In Every Laugh a Tear*. New Victoria Publishers, 1998.

Jewish lesbian meets nice butch woman, but before they can live happily ever after, the protagonist’s grandmother is kidnapped from her nursing home.

9) **Raphael, Lev.** *Dancing on Tisha B’av* (1991, St. Martin’s Press)

This is a book of short stories dealing with issues of gayness and Judaism, anti-Semitism, homophobia and other issues.

Non-Fiction

1) **Alpert, Rebecca.** *Like Bread on the Seder Plate: Jewish Lesbians and the Transformation of Tradition*. (Columbia University Press, 1998)

The title, *Like Bread on the Seder Plate*, refers to a tradition that began in the 1980s among Jewish lesbians, whereby they placed a piece of leavened bread on the Seder plate at Passover to evoke their feelings of isolation from Jewish tradition. Rebecca Alpert asserts a visible place for lesbians within Judaism, reinterpreting the homophobic strictures imposed by the Torah to construct a framework in which Jewish lesbians can feel included and accepted.

2) **Alpert, Rebecca;** Elwell, Sue; and Idelson, Shirley. *Lesbian Rabbis: The First Generation* (2001, Rutgers University Press)

This book has essays of some of the first lesbian rabbis to be ordained. They talk about textual issues, societal problems, their own stories and evaluate how the world has changed since they were first ordained.

3) **Aviv, Karen and Shneer, David.** (Ed.) *Queer Jews* (2002, Routledge)

This important anthology includes articles on Queer Jewish identity, spirituality, culture, institutional life and lived experience. An excellent, contemporary look at Queer Jewish life in the United States.

4) **Balka, Christine and Rose, Andy.** (Ed.) *Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian, Gay, and Jewish* (1991, Beacon Press)

One of the first books printed that described the gay Jewish experience. *Twice Blessed* is an essential tool understanding a historical perspective on the Jewish LGBTQ community.

5) **Beck, Evelyn Torton.** (Ed.) *Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology* (1989, Beacon Press)

A revised edition of the original 1982 book. It includes both essays directed at creating change in the Jewish community and essays directed at the general feminist community, identifying anti-Semitism in some feminist circles.

6) **Brown, Angela.** *Mentsh: On Being Jewish and Queer* (2004, Alyson Books)

This book is a compilation of 30 people’s personal stories of being Jewish and Queer in their individual ways.

7) **Greenberg, Steve.** *Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition* (2005, University of Wisconsin Press)

Greenberg gives his take on homosexuality within the orthodox tradition in this book, offering spiritual and practical advice for traditional Jews. Includes a thorough discussion of several of the biblical passages that have been the most troubling for LGBTQ people.

8) **Heger, Heinz.** *Men with the Pink Triangle: The True, Life-and-Death Story of Homosexuals in the Nazi Death Camps*. (Alyson Publications; revised edition- 1994)

In 1939, Heger, a Viennese university student, was arrested and sentenced

to prison for being a “degenerate.” Within weeks he was transported to Sachsenhausen, a concentration camp in East Germany, and forced to wear a pink triangle to show that his crime was homosexuality. He remained there, under horrific conditions, until the end of the war in 1945. Heger’s story would be unbearable were it not for the courage he and others used to survive and, having survived, that he bore witness.

9) **Kleinbaum, Sharon.** Listening for the Oboe (2005)

This collection of sermons given by Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum over the course of her career at Congregation Beth Simchat Torah in New York gives insight into the inner life of the world’s largest LGBTQ synagogue as it went through AIDS, September 11th, crisis in Israel and other milestone moments.

10) **Moore, Tracy.** Lesbiot: Israeli Lesbians Talk About Sexuality, Feminism, Judaism and Their Lives. (Cassel, March 1999)

Tracy Moore’s seminal 1999 study of Israeli Lesbians is full of interesting stories, some triumphant some ever so sad. Moore’s book is an important historical document and a beautiful exploration of lesbians in Israeli society.

11) **Raphael, Lev.** Journeys and Arrivals. On Being Gay and Jewish. (1996, Faber and Faber)

Journeys and Arrivals is a collection of autobiographical essays that allow the author to reveal the role that his Jewish and gay identities have had on his life and his writing.

12) **Rappaport, Chaim.** Judaism and Homosexuality: An Authentic Orthodox View

(2004, Vallentine Mitchell)

Rapoport offers a halachic discussion of homosexuality, advocating for inclusion of gay and lesbian Jews within the orthodox community. Much of his argument is based on the notion of tinok shenishbah (the kidnapped child).

13) **Schimmel, Lawrence.** Found Tribe: Jewish Coming Out Stories (2002, Sherman Asher Publishing)

This compilation of Jewish men’s coming out stories presents a number of personal testimonies about coming out to family, friends and the Jewish community including a variety of societal and denominational environments.

14) **Shilts, Randy.** The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk. (St. Martin’s Griffin, reissue- 1998)

Harvey Milk—a gay Jewish political organizer who became the first openly gay city supervisor in San Francisco was then assassinated (along with liberal mayor George Moscone)—and has become a hero of both the LGBTQ and Jewish communities. In this book, journalist Randy Shilts chronicles Milk’s beautiful and vital story.

15) **Shokied, Moshe.** A Gay Synagogue in New York (2002, University of Pennsylvania Press – originally published in 1995)

Moshe Shokeid spent a little over a year studying Congregation Beth Simchat Torah in New York and this book is the result of that lengthy anthropological study.

16) **Walzer, Lee.** Beyond Sodom and Eden: A Gay Journey Through Today’s Changing Israel. (Columbia University Press, 2000)

Between Sodom and Eden traces Israel’s gay and lesbian community in the 1990s, charting its progress in mainstream society. As a gay person, a lover of Israeli culture, and a Jew, Walzer presents the issues as both an insider and as an outsider—an American looking in and not quite belonging. His vantage point is just one twist in a thoroughly fascinating, original read.

Resources

1) **Address, Richard, Kushner, Joel, and Mitelman, Geoffery.** Kulanu: All of Us. URJ Press, 2007.

Kulanu is the Reform Movement’s guide to LGBTQ inclusion. With over 500 pages of material, “Kulanu” includes personal reflections, insightful essays, blessings and texts, Reform resolutions and responsa, three classroom lessons, an extensive bibliography and glossary, and much more, much like the original Kulanu did ten years ago, this edition seeks to pave the way for LGBTQ inclusion in synagogue communities for years to come.

2) **Bornstein, Kate.** Hello Cruel World: 101 Alternatives to Suicide for Teens, Freaks, and Other Outlaws. (Seven Stories Press, 2006)

In this book, Jewish transgender author, artist, and activist Kate Bornstein offers alternatives to suicide for troubled teenagers. The book is controversial in some of the suggestions Bornstein makes, but undeniably includes an important exploration of gender, self-esteem, and identity grappling. Bornstein’s book is a great fount of ideas for a thoughtful and caring professional.

3) **Brown, Mildred and Rounsley, Chloe Ann.** True Selves: Understanding Transsexualism: For Families, Friends, Coworkers and Helping Professionals (1996, Jossey-Bass)

This book discusses, mainly from a clinical perspective, trans issues and offers some guidance to people who may be working with trans people. There are explanations of important concepts and a brief description of some of the surgical procedures involved. Especially important is the lengthy description of the transition process.

4) **Savin-Williams, Ritch.** The New Gay Teenager (Adolescent Lives). (Harvard University Press, 2005)

Dr. Ritch Savin-Williams is the nation's leading researcher on coming out and the developmental process. In this recent book, Savin-Williams elucidates his research on how today's LGBTQ youth relate to language, identity, and culture. An important and informative read.

5) **Savin-Williams, Ritch.** Mom, Dad, I'm Gay: How Families Negotiate Coming Out. (American Psychological Association, 2001)

Based on extensive research, Savin-Williams explores families reactions to their children coming out in this important, instructive, and accessible book.

ORGANIZATIONS & INSTITUTIONS

There are a tremendous number of organizations and institutions set up particularly in the United States, but also around the world to support Jewish LGBTQ people and communities. There are even more general Jewish Organizations (such as most of the major Jewish movements, many synagogues, and other Jewish institutions) which have committees, Chavurah and other groups to support LGBTQ people. While this section focuses on Organizations and Institutions specifically dealing with being LGBTQ and Jewish, more local resources may be found through the local Jewish federation (resource: www.ujc.org), Jewish Family Services agency, local congregations and beyond.

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL JEWISH LGBTQ ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES

World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Jews: Keshet Ga'avah (Rainbow of Pride)

<http://www.LGBTQjews.org>

A general clearing house for all things Jewish LGBTQ. The World Congress has an extensive list of resources and organizations to support LGBTQ Jews. They also put on international conferences and events

International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission

<http://www.iglhrc.org/site/iglhrc>

The mission of the IGLHRC is to secure the full enjoyment of the human rights of all people and communities subject to discrimination or abuse on the basis of sexual orientation or expression, gender identity or expression, and/or HIV status.

Keshet Rabbis

<http://www.keshetrabbis.org>

A listing of Conservative movement clergy supportive of inclusion of LGBTQ people.

Author: Noah Branman
Editor: David Levy

Union for Reform Judaism LGBTQ resources (www.urj.org)

<http://keshernet.com/socialaction/LGBTQissues/> (Keshet)

<http://urj.org/membership/diversity/gblt/> (URJ)

<http://rac.org/advocacy/issues/issuegl/> (RAC)

Jewish Reconstructionist Federation LGBTQ resources

<http://www.jrf.org>

<http://www4.jrf.org/resources-library&tid=5:6&show=#Reconstructionism%20Today>

OrthoDykes

<http://www.orthodykes.org>

A support organization and resource for Orthodox Lesbians with groups in New York, Israel, on the internet and elsewhere.

United States

National Union of Jewish LGBTQ Qludents (NUJLS)

<http://www.nujlsonline.org>

College organization which puts on a yearly conference for LGBTQQI Jewish Students as well as providing resources

Kolot: The Center for Jewish Women's and Gender Studies, for the RRC

<http://www.kolot.org>

Part of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, they provide support, training and courses to students regarding issues of gender.

Nehirim : A Spiritual Initiative for LGBTQ Jews

<http://www.nehirim.org>

Based in New York City, Nehirim allows LGBTQ Jews to connect with one another and themselves through a variety of programming

Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation

<http://www.huc.edu/ijso>

A part of the Reform Movement's Hebrew Union College that works on issues of inclusion within synagogues, and creating dialogue on issues of

sexual orientation within Judaism. The IJSO maintains an extensive online resource library worth tapping into.

Jewish Mosaic: The National Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity

<http://www.Jewishmosaic.org>

Jewish Mosaic partners with Jewish organizations, communities, and individuals of every denomination to create a world where all Jews are fully included in communal life, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Founded in summer 2003 and based in Denver, Colorado, Jewish Mosaic is the first national organization dedicated to helping the Jewish world become more open, accessible, and welcoming to LGBTQ Jews and their families. Based in Denver, CO.

International Association of Lesbian and Gay Children of Holocaust Survivors

<http://www.infotrue.com/gay.html>

The Association, which now has over 150 members in eleven countries, encourages the research of what actually happened to the generation of homosexuals who were persecuted or perished during the Third Reich. It also serves a social function of allowing us to share our experiences of being lesbian and gay children of Holocaust Survivors, and a forum to disseminate the information.

Israel

The Aguda

<http://www.aguda-ta.org.il>

The Israeli Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Association (the "Aguda") was established in 1975 as a national, grassroots organization dedicated to furthering the rights of the LGBTQ community in Israel. The Aguda is committed to providing emotional and psychological support for LGBTQs and to raising the consciousness and pride of the LGBTQ community. It strives to instill progressive social and health-related principles in the Israeli public, engages in education and dissemination of information, and organizes social and cultural activities. The Aguda is active throughout the country from Kiryat Shmona to Eilat. It is a non-profit, volunteer organization, benefiting from the participation of over 500 active volunteers.

HaAsiron HaAcher

<http://www.gay.org.il/asiron>

The LGBTQ student union at Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

IGY-Israeli Gay Youth

<http://www.igy.co.il>

A youth group across Israel for gay and lesbian youth.

Jerusalem Open House

<http://www.worldpride.net/index.php?id=1803>

The JOH has two complementary and overlapping programming areas:

(1) we provide direct services designed to build our community, catalyzing the development of LGBTQ fellowship and culture;

(2) we advocate for social change on issues of concern to our constituents, taking action to promote the values of tolerance and pluralism in Jerusalem.

Political Council for LGBTQ Rights in Israel

<http://www.pcgri.org>

Gay Middle East

<http://www.gaymiddleeast.com>

Informational website with travel information about Israel and the rest of the Middle East for LGBTQ Travelers.

Queer Jews around the World

Argentina

Keshet Buenos Aires

<http://www.keshet.com.ar>

Australia

Aleph Melbourne

<http://aleph.org.au>

Dayenu

<http://www.dayenu.org.au>

Based in Sydney.

Austria

Reuth

re_uth@hotmail.com

Brazil

JGBR-Grupo de Judeus LGBTQTs Brasileiros

<http://www.jgbr.com.br>

France

Beit Haverim

<http://www.beit-haverim.com>

Germany

Yachad Deutschland

<http://www.yachad-deutschland.de>

Mexico

Shalom Amigos

<http://www.shalomamigos.org>

South Africa

Jewish Outlook

<http://www.jewishoutlook.org.za>

United Kingdom

Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group

<http://www.jglg.org.uk>

LGBTQ Synagogues

California

Beth Chayim Chadashim

<http://www.bcc-la.org>

Los Angeles, CA

Congregation Kol Ami

<http://www.kol-ami.org>

West Hollywood, CA

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav

<http://www.shaarzahav.org>

San Francisco, CA

Washington, D.C.

Bet Mishpachah

www.Betmish.org

Washington, DC

Florida

Beth Rachamim Synagogue

<http://www.bethrachamim.org>

St. Petersburg, FL

Congregation Etz Chaim

<http://www.etzchaimfl.org>

Wilton Manors, FL

Georgia

Congregation Bet Haverim

<http://www.congregationbethaverim.org>

Atlanta, GA

Illinois

Congregation Or Chadash

<http://www.orchadash.org>

Chicago, IL

Massachusetts

Congregation Am Tikvah

<http://www.amtikva.org>

Brookline, MA

Pennsylvania

Bet Tikva

<http://www.bettikvah.org>

Pittsburgh, PA

Congregation Beth Ahavah

<http://www.bethahavah.org>

Philadelphia, PA

New York

Congregation Beth Simchat Torah

<http://www.cbst.org>

New York, NY

Texas

Congregation Beth El Binah

<http://www.bethelbinah.org>

Dallas, TX

Washington

Congregation Tikvah Chadashah

<http://www.tikvahchadashah.org>

Seattle, WA

United Kingdom

Beit Klal Yisrael

<http://www.beit-klal-yisrael.org.uk>

London, UK

National LGBTQ Organizations

Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)

<http://www.glaad.org>

Dedicated to ensuring fair, accurate and inclusive representation of people and events in the media as a means of eliminating homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

Human Rights Campaign (HRC)

<http://www.hrc.org>

America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve LGBTQ equality. HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBTQ citizens.

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF)

<http://www.thetaskforce.org>

NGLTF seeks to build political power in the LGBTQ community from the ground up. They work on a legislative level to promote LGBTQ causes.

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)

<http://www.pflag.org>

PFLAG celebrates diversity and envisions a society that embraces everyone, including those of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Excellent support, advocacy, and activist group for family and friends.

Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

<http://www.glsen.org>

GLSEN, or the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for ALL students.

GenderPAC

<http://www.gpac.org>

GenderPAC works to ensure that classrooms, communities, and workplaces are safe for everyone to learn, grow, and succeed - whether or not they meet expectations for masculinity and femininity.

Lambda Legal

<http://www.lambdalegal.org>

A national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of LGBTQ people and those with HIV through litigation, education and public policy work.

National Center for Transgender Equality

<http://www.nctequality.org>

A social justice organization dedicated to advancing the equality of transgender people through advocacy, collaboration and empowerment. Monitors federal activity and communicates this activity to members around the country, providing congressional education, and establishing a center of expertise on transgender issues

Local Jewish LGBTQ Organizations

In addition to the organizations listed below which serve LGBTQ Jews, many synagogues and Chavurah and other groups to welcome LGBTQ people to their community.

Montreal, Canada

Feygelah

<http://www.feygelah.org>

A community-based umbrella organization

Boston, MA

Keshet

<http://www.boston-keshet.org>

Keshet seeks to create a fully welcoming and inclusive Jewish community for LGBTQ Jews in Greater Boston. Keshet develops leadership

for change among LGBTQ Jews and allies to effect concrete changes in Jewish institutions' policies and cultures.

Minneapolis, MN

Keshet Ga'avah

keshetgaavahmn@mac.com

New Jersey

New Jersey's Lesbian and Gay Havurah

<http://www.njhav.org>

New Jersey's Lesbian & Gay Havurah is a community of LGBTQ! Jews and their friends throughout NJ.

New York

JQYouth.org

<http://www.jqyouth.org>

A social/support group made up of frum/formerly frum LGBTQ Jews ages 17-30. JQY meets for monthly meetings and informal social get togethers. They also have an anonymous online discussion group.

Texas

Mispacha Alizim

mishpachat@onebox.com

650-723-1603

Name: D'ror Chankin-Gould

Job Title: Senior JCSC Fellow

Location: Columbia/Barnard Hillel

Identity: Gay

Contact Information: Dror.Yitzhak@Yahoo.com ;

DChankin-Gould@hillel.columbia.edu

(212)854-6977

Name: Mychal Copeland

Job Title: Rabbi

Location: Hillel at Stanford

Identity: Lesbian

Contact Information: rabbimrc@stanford.edu

(650) 725-1424

Name: Josh Furman

Job Title: Program/Project Coordinator

Location: University of Washington Hillel

Identity: Gay

Contact Information: joshua.furman@gmail.com, joshf@hilleluw.org

(206)527-1997

Name: Seth Goren

Job Title: Director of J'burgh (graduate student, young adult and post-college programs)

Location: Jewish University Center of Pittsburgh

Identity: Gay

Contact Information: sethg@hilleljuc.org

(412) 621-8875

Name: Rabbi Jennifer L. Gravitz

Job Title: Director of Jewish Education/ Campus Rabbi

Location: Rochester Institute of Technology

Identity: Lesbian

Contact Information: jlgng@rit.edu

(585) 305-0172

Name: Moshe Hajaj

Job Title: Israel Fellow

Location: Hillel at the University of Florida

Identity: Gay

Contact Information: moshe@ufhillel.org

(352) 372-2900 x 714

Name: Miriam Ignatoff

Job Title: Program Director

Location: Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH

Identity: Queer

Contact Information: Miriam.Ignatoff@oberlin.edu

(440) 775-51589

Name: Rabbi Jason Klein

Job Title: Director

Location: UMBC Hillel (Baltimore, MD)

Identity: Gay/Queer

Contact Information rabbijason@umbc.edu

(410) 455-1329

Name: Meryl Klein

Job Title: JCSC Fellow

Location: Hillel of San Francisco

Identity: Queer

Contact Information: jcsc@sfhillel.org

(415) 333-4922

Name: David R Levy

Job Title: Executive Director

Location: Los Angeles Hillel Council

Identity: Gay

Contact Information: dlevy@lahillel.org

323-761-8555 x101

Name: Rabbi Steven P. Nathan

Job Title: Campus Rabbi

Location: Hampshire College

Identity: Queer

Contact Information: snathan@hampshire.edu

(413) 559-6234

Name: Ariel Naveh

Job Title: Senior JCSC Fellow

Location: Goucher College Hillel

Identity: Gay

Contact Information: ariel.naveh@goucher.edu

(410) 337-6554

Name: Vanessa “Vinny” Prell

Job Title: Executive Director

Location: National Union for Jewish LGBTQI Students

(Shusterman International Center; Washington DC)

Identity: Queer/GenderQueer

Contact Information: vprell@nujlonline.org

(202) 449-6647

Name: Andy Ratto

Job Title: Senior JCSC Fellow

Location: St. Louis Hillel, Washington University

Identity: Gay

Contact Information: andy@stlouishillel.org

(510) 499-6026

Name: Mike Rothbaum

Job Title: Program Director/ Campus Rabbi

Location: Hillels of Westchester

Identity: Gay/Queer

Contact Information: Michael@hillelsofwestchester.org

(917) 710-6006

Name: Jordyn Rozensky

Job Title: Senior JCSC Fellow

Location: M.I.T. Hillel

Contact Information: jordynr@mit.edu

(617) 253-2982

Name: Sharon Stiefel

Job Title: Rabbi and Associate Director

Location: University of Minnesota

Identity: Lesbian

Contact Information: stief001@umn.edu

612-379-4026

Name: Lina Zerbarini

Job Title: Associate Rabbi

Location: Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale

Identity: Lesbian

Contact Information: rabbi.lina@yale.edu

203-432-8523

Actively Allied Staff Members

Name: Simon Amiel

Job Title: Director of the Jewish Campus Service Corps

Location: Schusterman International Center; Seattle, Washington

Contact Information: samiel@hillel.org

(206) 812-0003

Name: Chanel E. Dubofsky

Job Title: Tzedek Coordinator

Location: Columbia/Barnard Hillel

Contact Information: cd2303@columbia.edu

(212) 854-0456

Name: Andrea Hoffman

Job Title: Director of Birthright Israel

Location: Schusterman International Center; Milwaukee, WI

Contact Information: ahoffman@hillel.org

(202) 449-6586

Name: Nellie Krentzman

Job Title: Jewish Student Life Coordinator

Location: UVM-Hillel in Burlington, VT

Contact Information: nellie@uvmhillel.org

(802) 656-1153

Name: Ellen Rosenshein

Job Title: Assistant Director

Location: Hillel at Binghamton

Contact Information: erosensh@binghamton.edu

(607) 777-3424

Name: Rabbi Bruce Bromberg Seltzer

Job Title: Hillel Director/Chaplain (SC), Religious Life Advisor (AC)

Location: Amherst College/ Smith College

Contact Information: bseltzer@email.smith.edu

(413) 585-2755

QUEER JEWISH CAMPUS GROUPS

School: Binghamton University

Name of Group: Ga'avah

Staff Contact: Ellen Rosenshein; erosensh@binghamton.edu

School: Brown University

Name of Group: Queer Hillel

Staff Contact: Sam Pohl; Samantha_Pohl@brown.edu

Student Contact: Anna Schnur-Fishman;

Anna_Schnur-Fishman@brown.edu

School: Claremont University Consortium

Name of Group: Queers of Faith

Staff Contact: Rabbi Leslie Bergson, leslieb@cuc.claremont.edu

School: Columbia University/Barnard College

Name of Group: Gayava

Staff Contact: D'ror Chankin-Gould; JCSC@hillel.columbia.edu

Student Contact: Jason Bello & Rachel Gerson,

Gayava@hillel.columbia.edu

School: Duke

Name of group: Chutzpah

Contact: Janie Long; Janie.Long@duke.edu

School: Harvard University

Name of Group: BAGELS

Student Contact: Dan Ketover; ketover@fas.harvard.edu

School: Hebrew University

Name of Group: Ha'Asiron Ha'Acher

<http://www.gay.org.il/asiron/index.php>

School: Indiana University--Bloomington

Name of Group: Keshet

Staff Contact : Kim Kushner, kimkushn@indiana.edu

School: New York University

Name of Group: Keshet

Staff Contact: Todd Grabarsky; todd.grabarsky@nyu.edu

and Todd Smith tms4@nyu.edu

Student Contact: Emma Hutchinson, erh244@nyu.edu

Sarah Fields, sarah.fields@nyu.edu

School: Oberlin College

Name of Group: Queer Jews and Allies (QJews)

Staff Contact: Shimon Brand; shimon.brand@oberlin.edu

School: Ohio State University

Name: JQA - (Jewish Queers and Allies)

Staff Contact: Susannah Sagan; sagan.7@osu.edu

School: Stanford University

Name of Group: JQ (Jewish Queers)

Staff Contact: Noah Branman, nbranman@stanford.edu

Student Contact: Dan Zeehandelaar, danielz@stanford.edu

School: University of Chicago

Name of Group: QueeReligious

Student Contact: S.J. Cohen, queerreligious@listhost.uchicago.edu

School: University of Michigan

Name of Group: Ahavah

Staff Contact: Rabbi Nathan Martin; rabbinm@umich.edu

School: University of Minnesota

Name of Group: Keshet

Staff Contact: Rabbi Sharon Stiefel

Student Contact: Bryan Gordon, linguista@gmail.com; keshet@ujews.com

School: University of Pennsylvania

Name of Group: J-BaGeL

Staff Contact: Jeremy Brochin; jbrochin@pobox.upenn.edu

Student Contact: Ellen Frait; efraint@sas.upenn.edu

School: University of Washington

Name of Group: Bagel

Staff Contact: Josh Furman; joshf@hilleluw.org

Student contact: Ilana Butrimovitz; butrii@u.washington.edu

School: Washington University at St. Louis

Name of group: Keshet

Staff Contact: Andy Ratto, andy@stlouishillel.org (314) 935-9040

Student Contact: Ross Zeitlin, rzeitlin@wustl.edu (727)-580-7699

a benefit or cash payment in lieu of the benefit when offering the benefit is not permitted by laws or regulations (e.g. flexible benefit plans).

Those employees taking advantage of benefits of domestic partners are encouraged to consult a tax expert for any tax implications.

For more information contact Dennis Kirschbaum:

dkirschbaum@hillel.org

COLOPHON

Filosofia

was designed by Zuzana Licko in 1996. Filosofia is her interpretation of a Bodoni. It shows the personal preference for a geometric Bodoni, while incorporating such features as the slightly bulging round serif endings which often appeared in printed samples of Bodoni's work and reflect Bodoni's origins in letterpress technology.

Agenda

was designed by Greg Thompson, Agenda offers a high-style alternative to the contemporary Swiss sans. Agenda is a fresh humanist sanserif inspired by Edward Johnston's magnificent London Transport face, drawn for the Underground in 1916.

Hillel's mission is to enrich the lives of Jewish undergraduate and graduate students so that they may enrich the Jewish people and the world. Hillel seeks to reach all Jewish students where they are: to touch their lives, inspire their growth, and strengthen their roots. LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) Jewish students have been an integral part of our campus communities for generations. However, this presence sometimes has been welcomed, and sometimes it has not. This guide was created to lower the barriers for LGBTQ Jews in the campus Jewish community. Through this guide, Hillel hopes to inform the campus at large about the unique needs of LGBTQ students, to help these students heal their wounds, to transform communities into warmer spaces, and to suggest the radical notion that all Jews can and should celebrate their identity with love, affirmation, and joy.

